TONY BUTLER

"'Make me sitting beside you as we are now—you drawing, and I looking over you.'"

TONY BUTLER

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

30050

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE
NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
MILFORD LANE, STRAND, W.C.

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TONY BUTLER.

CHAPTER I.

THE COTTAGE BESIDE "THE CAUSEWAY."

In a little cleft, not deep enough to be a gorge, between two grassy hills, traversed by a clear stream, too small to be called a river, too wide to be a rivulet, stood, and I believe, still stands, a little cottage, whose one bay-window elevates it above the condition of a labouring man's, and shows in its spacious large-paned proportions, pretensions to taste as well as station. From the window a coast-line can be seen to which nothing in the kingdom can find the equal. It takes in the bold curve of shore from the "White Rocks" to the Giant's Causeway—a sweep of coast broken by jutting headland and promontory, with sandy bays nestling between gigantic walls of pillared rock, and showing beneath the green water the tesselated pavement of those broken shafts which our superstition calls Titanic. The desolate rock and ruin of Dunluce, the fairy bridge of Carrig-a-Rede, are visible; and on a commonly clear day Staffa can be seen, its outline only carrying out the strange formation of the columnar rocks close at hand.

This cottage, humble enough in itself, is not relieved in its aspect by the culture around it. A small vegetable garden, rudely fenced with a dry-stone wall, is the only piece of vegetation, for the cutting winds of the North Sea are unfriendly to trees, and the light sandy soil of the hills only favours the fern and the foxglove. Of these, indeed, the growth is luxuriant, and the path which leads down from the high road to the cottage is cut through what might be called a grove of these leafy greeneries. This same path was not

much traversed, and more than once within the year was the billhook required to keep it open, so little intercourse was maintained between the cottage and the world, whose frontier lay about a mile off. A widow and her son, with one servant, were the occupants. It had been a fishing-lodge of her husband's in more prosperous days. His memory and the cheapness of life in the neighbourhood had decided her in choosing it, lonely and secluded as it was; and here she had passed fourteen years, her whole care being the education of her boy, a task to which she addressed herself with all the zeal and devotion of her nature. There was, it is true, a village school at Ballintray, about three miles off, to which he went in summer; but when the dark short days of winter set in with swooping storms of rain and wind, she held him, so far as she could, close prisoner, and pored with him over tasks to the full as difficult to herself as to him. So far as a fine, open-hearted, generous disposition, truthful and straightforward, could make him, he repaid all the love and affection she could bear him. He was well-grown, good-looking, and brave. There was scarcely an exercise of which he was not master; and whether in the saddle over a stiff country, or on the thwart of a boat in a stormy sea, Tony Butler could hold his own against all competitors. The leap of twenty feet four inches he had made on the level sward was one of the show objects of the village, and the place where he had pitched a fourteen-pound sledge to the top of a cliff was marked by a stone with a rude attempt at an inscription. Fortunate was he if these were enough for glory, for his gifts scarcely rose to higher things. He was not clever, nor was he very teachable; his apprehension was not quick, and his memory was bad. The same scatter-brained forgetfulness that he had in little things attended him in more serious ones. Whenever his intellect was called on for a great effort he was sure to be vanquished, and he would sit for hours before an open book as hopeless of mastering it as though the volume were close-clasped and locked before him. Dull men are not generally alive to their own dulness, but Tony was—he saw and felt it very bitterly. He thought, it is true, that there ought to be a way to his intellect, if it could only be discovered, but he owned to himself he had not found it; and, with some lingering hope of it, he would carry his books to his room and sit down to them with a resolute heart, and ponder, and puzzle, and wonder, till he either fell asleep over the pages, or felt the scalding tears blinding him with the conscious thought that he was not equal to the task before him.

Strange enough, his mother, cheated by that love which filled every avenue of her heart, marked little of this. She thought that Tony had no great taste for music, nor patience enough for drawing. She fancied he deemed history dry, and rather undervalued geography. If he hated French, it was because he was such an intense Anglican; and as to figures, his poor dear father had no great skill in them, and indeed his ruined fortune came of tampering with them. Though thus, item by item, she would have been reduced to own that Tony was not much of a scholar, she would unhesitatingly have declared that he was a remarkably gifted boy, and equal to any condition he could be called to fulfil. There was this much of excuse for her credulity—he was a universal favourite. There was not a person of any class who had other than a good word for him; and this, be it remarked, in a country where people fall into few raptures, and are rarely enthusiasts. The north of Ireland is indeed as cold a soil for the affections as it is ungenial in its vegetation. Love finds it just as hard to thrive as the young larch-trees, nipped as they are by cutting winds and sleety storms; and to have won favour where it is weighed out so scrupulously, implied no petty desert. There is, however, a rigid sense of justice which never denies to accord its due to each. Tony had gained his reputation by an honest verdict, the award of a jury who had seen him from his childhood and knew him well.

The great house of the county was Sir Arthur Lyle's, and there Tony Butler almost might be said to live. His word was law in the stables, the kennel, the plantations, and the boat-quay. All liked him. Sir Arthur, a stern but hearty old Anglo-Indian; my lady, a fine specimen of town pretension and exclusiveness, cultivated to its last perfection by Oriental indulgence; Isabella—a beauty and a fortune—about to shine at the next drawing-room, liked him; and the widowed daughter of the house, Mrs. Trafford, whom many deemed handsomer than her sister, and whose tact and worldly skill made even beauty but one of her attractions, said he was "a fine creature," and "it was a thousand pities he had not a good estate and a title." Sir Arthur's sons, three in number, were all in India; the two elder in high civil appointments, the younger serving in a regiment of hussars. Their sisters, however, constantly assured Tony that George, Henry, and Mark would be so fond of him, especially Mark, who was the soldier, and who would be charmed to meet with one so fond of all his own pursuits.

It was with sincere pride Mrs. Butler saw her son in such favour at the great house—that princely place to which the company came from remote parts of the kingdom, and to mix with which the neighbouring gentry were only admitted sparingly and at rare intervals; for Sir Arthur's wealth was to society a sort of crushing power, a kind of social Nasmyth hammer, that smashed and ground down whatever came beneath it. No small distinction was it, therefore, for the widow's son to be there; not merely admitted and on sufferance, but encouraged, liked, and made much of. Sir Arthur had known Tony's father in India, long long years ago; indeed it was when Sir Arthur was a very small civil servant, and Captain Butler was a gorgeous aide-de-camp on the Governor-General's staff; and strange it was, the respect with which the brilliant soldier then inspired him had survived through all the changes and advancements of a successful life, and the likeness the youth bore to his father assisted to strengthen this sentiment. He would have noticed the widow, too, if she had been disposed to accept his attentions; but she refused all invitations to leave her home, and save at the little meeting-house on a Sunday, where her friend Dr. Stewart held forth, was never seen beyond the paling of her garden.

What career Tony was to follow, what he was to do, was an oft-debated question between her and Dr. Stewart, her worthy adviser in spirituals; and though it was the ever-recurring subject as they sat of an evening in the porch, the solution seemed just as remote as ever—Mrs. Butler averring that there was nothing that with a little practice he couldn't do, and the minister sighingly protesting that the world was very full just now, and there was just barely enough for those who were in it.

"What does he incline to himself, madam?" asked the worthy man, as he saw that his speech had rather a discouraging effect.

"He'd like to follow his father's career, and be a soldier."

"Oh dear!" sighed out the minister; "a man must be rich enough to do without a livelihood that takes to that one. What would you say to the sea?"

"He's too old for the navy. Tony will be twenty in August."

The minister would have liked to hint that other ships went down into the "great waters" as well as those that carried Her Majesty's bunting, but he was faint-hearted and silent.

"I take it," said he, after a pause, "that he has no great mind for the learned professions, as they call them?"

"No inclination whatever, and I cannot say I'm sorry for it. My poor boy would be lost in that great ocean of worldliness and self-seeking. I don't mean if he were to go into the Church," said she, blushing crimson at the awkwardness of her speech, "but you know he has no vocation for holy orders, and such a choice would be therefore impossible."

"I'm thinking it would not be his line neither," said the old man, dryly. "What o' the mercantile pursuits? You shake your head. Well, there's farming?"

"Farming, my dear Dr. Stewart—farming means at least some thousand pounds capital, backed by considerable experience, and, I fear me, my poor Tony is about as wanting in one as in the other."

"Well, ma'am, if the lad can neither be a soldier nor a sailor, nor a merchant, nor a farmer, nor will be a lawyer, a doctor, or a preacher o' the Word, I'm sore pushed to say what there's open to him, except some light business in the way of a shop, or an agency like, which maybe you'd think beneath you."

"I'm certain my son would, sir; and no great shame either that Colonel Walter Butler's son should think so—a C.B. and a Guelph of Hanover, though he never wore the decoration. It is not so easy for *us* to forget these things as it is for our friends."

This was rather cruel, particularly to one who had been doing his best to pilot himself through the crooked channels of difficulties, and was just beginning to hope he was in deep water.

"Wouldn't the Colonel's friends be likely to give him a helping hand?" said the minister, timidly, and like one not quite sure of his ground.

"I have not asked them, nor is it likely that I will," said she, sternly; then, seeing in the old man's face the dismay and discouragement her speech had produced, she added, "My husband's only brother, Sir Omerod Butler, was not on speaking terms with him for years—indeed, from the time of our marriage. Eleanor Mackay, the Presbyterian minister's daughter, was thought a *mésalliance;* and maybe it was—I won't deny it, doctor. It was deemed a great rise in the world to me, though I never felt it exactly in that way myself. It was *my* pride to think my husband a far greater man than any of his family, and it was *his* to say I had helped him to become so."

"I've heard o' that too," was the cautious rejoinder of the old minister.

The memories thus suddenly brought up were too much for the poor widow's composure, and she had to turn away and

wipe the tears from her eyes. "Yes, sir," said she at last, "my noble-hearted husband was made to feel through his whole life the scorn of those who would not know his wife, and it is not from such as these my poor boy is to crave assistance. As for Tony himself," said she, with more energy of voice and manner, "he'd never forgive me if I took such a step."

The good minister would fain have rebuked the indulgence of sentiments like these, which had little of forgiveness in their nature. He felt sorely tempted to make the occasion profitable by a word in season; but his sagacity tempered his zeal, and he simply said, "Let byganes be byganes, Mrs. Butler, or, at all events, let them not come back like troubled spirits to disturb the future."

"I will do my best, doctor," said she, calmly, "and, to do so, I will talk of something else. Can you tell me if there is a Mr. Elphinstone in the Ministry now—in the Cabinet, I mean," said she, correcting herself, for she remembered what the word signifies to Presbyterian ears.

"There is a Sir Harry Elphinstone, Secretary of State for the Colonies, ma'am."

"That must be the same, then; my husband always called him Harry; they were like brothers at the Cape long long ago. Couldn't he do something for Tony, think you?"

"The very man who could; and maybe, too, in the very sort of career would suit the lad best of all. He's strong of limb and stout of heart, and has brave health—he's just the man to meet the life and enjoy the very accidents of a new world."

"If he could leave me—that is, if I could bear to part with *him*, doctor," said she, with a thick utterance.

"These are not days, my dear madam, when a mother can tie a son to her apron. The young birds will leave the nest, make it ever so warm and snug for them; and it was a wise Providence that so decreed it."

"Would there be any impropriety in my writing to Mr.—Sir Harry Elphinstone?" asked she.

"I can see none whatever. It is more than likely that he'll thank you heartily for the chance of serving his old friend's son. Such a great man gives away every day more places than would provide for three generations of either of us: and it must be a rare pleasure when he can serve the Queen and gladden his own heart together."

"You'd maybe help me with the letter, doctor," asked she, half diffidently.

"Not a doubt of it, Mrs. Butler; my poor aid is quite at

your service: but hadn't we best, first of all, speir a bit, and see what the lad thinks of it? Let us find out that it's the life he'd take to willingly. It's no by way of reproach to him I say it; but we all know that when a young fellow gets accustomed to ride a blood horse with a groom after him, and eat his soup with a damask napkin over his knees, it's a sore change to mount a mustang and digest raw buffalo."

"If you mean by that, Dr. Stewart, that Tony has been spoiled by a life of luxury and indolence, you do him great wrong. The poor dear boy is half heart-broken at times at his purposeless, unprofitable existence. There are days he is so overcome that he can scarcely lift up his head for it. This very morning was one of them; and it was only when Sir Arthur sent over a third time to say, 'You must come; I'll take no excuse'—that I could persuade him to set off. They are expecting young Captain Lyle to-day, and making all sorts of festive preparations to receive him. Tony has charge of the fireworks; and as Sir Arthur says, 'If you leave your chemicals to other hands, the chances are we shall all be blown up together.'"

"I remember the Captain when he was just so high," said the doctor, holding his hand about three feet from the ground; "he used to come to me every Saturday for a lesson in Scripture—smart enough he was, but a proud sort of boy, that kept his class-fellows at a distance, and when the lesson was over would not speak to one of them. He was the baronet's son, and they were the sons of his father's tradespeople. I remember I made a complaint against him once, I forget for what, but he never came to my house after."

Mrs. Butler seemed not to follow the doctor's speech; indeed, her whole heart was so set on one object and one theme that it was only by an effort she could address herself to any other. The humblest piece in which Tony played was a drama full of interest. Without *him*, the stage had no attraction, and she cared not who were the performers. The doctor, therefore, was some time before he perceived that his edifying reflections on the sins of pride and self-conceit were unheeded. Long experience had taught him tolerance in such matters; he had known even elders to nod; and so he took his hat and said farewell with a good grace, and a promise to help her with a letter to the Secretary of State whenever the time came to write it.

Late on the night of that day in which this conversation occurred, Mrs. Butler sat at her writing-desk, essaying for the tenth time how to address that great man whose favour she

would propitiate. Letter-writing had never been her gift, and she distrusted her powers even unfairly in this respect. The present was, besides, a case of some difficulty. She knew nothing of the sort of person she was addressing beyond the fact that he and her husband, when very young men, lived on terms of close intimacy and friendship. It might be that the great Minister had forgotten all about that long ago, or might not care to be reminded of it. It might be that her husband in his sanguine and warm-hearted way, calculated rather on the affection he bestowed than that he should receive, and so deemed the friendship between them a closer and stronger tie than it was. It might be, too—she had heard of such things—that men in power are so besieged by those who assume to have claims upon them, that they lose temper and patience, and indiscriminately class all such applicants as mere hungry place-hunters, presuming upon some accidental meeting—some hap-hazard acquaintance of a few minutes. "And so," said she, "if he has not heard of my husband for thirty odd years, he may come to look coldly on this letter of mine, and even ask, 'who is Eleanor Butler, and of whom is she the widow?' I will simply say to him, the son of the late Colonel Walter Butler, with whose name his widow believes you are not unacquainted, solicits some assistance on your part, towards—towards—shall I say at once an appointment in one of our colonies, or merely what may forward his pursuits in a new world? I wish I could hit upon something that will not sound like the everyday tune that must ring in his ears; but how can I, when what I seek is the selfsame thing?"

She leaned her head on her hand in thought, and, as she pondered, it occurred to her what her husband would have thought of such a step as she was taking. Would Walter have sanctioned it? He was a proud man on such points. He had never asked for anything in his life, and it was one of his sayings—"There was no station that was not too dearly bought at the price of asking for it." She canvassed and debated the question with herself, balancing all that she owed to her husband's memory against all that she ought to attempt for her boy's welfare. It was a matter of no easy solution; but an accident decided for her what all her reasoning failed in; for, as she sat thinking, a hurried step was heard on the gravel, and then the well-known sound of Tony's latch-key followed, and he entered the room flushed and heated. He was still in dinner dress, but his cravat was partly awry, and his look excited and angry.

"Why, my dear Tony," said she, rising, and parting his hair tenderly on his forehead, "I didn't look for you here to-night; how came it that you left the Abbey at this hour?"

"Wasn't it a very good hour to come home?" answered he, curtly. "We dined at eight; I left at half-past eleven. Nothing very unusual in all that."

"But you always slept there; you had that nice room you told me of."

"Well, I preferred coming home. I suppose that was reason enough."

"What has happened, Tony, darling? Tell me frankly and fearlessly what it is that has ruffled you. Who has such a right to know it, or, if need be, to sympathize with you, as your own dear mother?"

"How you run on, mother, and all about nothing! I dine out, and I come back a little earlier than my wont, and immediately you find out that some one has outraged or insulted me."

"Oh, no, no. I never dreamed of that, my dear boy!" said she, colouring deeply.

"Well, there's enough about it" said he, pacing the room with hasty strides. "What is that you were saying the other day about a Mr. Elphinstone—that he was an old friend of my father's, and that they had chummed together long ago?"

"All these scrawls that you see there," said she, pointing to the table "have been attempts to write to him, Tony. I was trying to ask him to give you some sort of place somewhere."

"The very thing I want, mother," said he, with a half-bitter laugh—"some sort of place somewhere."

"And," continued she, "I was pondering whether it might not be as well to see if Sir Arthur Lyle wouldn't write to some of his friends in power——"

"Why should we ask him? What has he to do with it?" broke he in, hastily. "I'm not the son of an old steward or family coachman, that I want to go about with a black pocket-book stuffed with recommendatory letters. Write simply and fearlessly to this great man—I don't know his rank—and say whose son I am. Leave me to tell him the rest."

"My dear Tony, you little know how such people are overwhelmed with such-like applications, and what slight chance there is that you will be distinguished from the rest."

"At all events, I shall not have the humiliation of a patron. If he will do anything for me, it will be for the

sake of my father's memory, and I need not be ashamed of that."

"What shall I write then?" And she took up her pen.

"Sir—I suppose he is 'Sir;' or is he 'My Lord?'"

"No. His name is Sir Harry Elphinstone."

"Sir,

"The young man who bears this note is the only son of the late Colonel Walter Butler, C.B. He has no fortune, no profession, no friends, and very little ability. Can you place him in any position where he may acquire some of the three first and can dispense with the last?

"Your humble servant,

"Eleanor Butler."

"Oh, Tony! you don't think we could send such a letter as this?" said she, with a half-sad smile.

"I am certain I could deliver it, mother," said he, gravely, "and I'm sure that it would answer its purpose just as well as a more finished composition."

"Let me at least make a good copy of it," said she, as he folded it up and placed it in an envelope.

"No, no," said he; "just write his name, and all the fine things that he is sure to be, before and after it, and, as I said before, leave the issue to me."

"And when would you think of going, Tony?"

"To-morrow morning, by the steamer that will pass this on the way to Liverpool. I know the captain, and he will give me a passage; he's always teasing me to take a trip with him."

"To-morrow! but how could you get ready by to-morrow? I'll have to look over all your clothes, Tony."

"My dear little mother," said he, passing his arm round her, and kissing her affectionately, "how easy it is to hold a review where there's only a corporal's guard for inspection! All my efficient movables will fit into a very small portmanteau, and I'll pack it in less than ten minutes."

"I see no necessity for all this haste, particularly where we have so much to consider and talk over. We ought to consult the doctor, too; he's a warm friend, Tony, and bears you a sincere affection."

"He's a good fellow—I like him anywhere but in the pulpit," muttered he, below his breath. "And he'd like to write to his daughter—she's a governess in some family near Putney, I think.

I'll go and see her—Dolly and I are old playfellows. I don't know," added he, with a laugh, "whether hockey and football are part of a polite female education, but, if they be, the pupils that have got Dolly Stewart for their governess are in rare luck."

"But why must there be all this hurry?"

"Because it's a whim of mine, dear little mother. Because—but don't ask me for reasons, after having spoiled me for twenty years, and given me my own way in everything. I've got it into my wise head—and you know what a wise head it is—that I'm going to do something very brilliant. You'll puzzle me awfully if you ask me where or how—so just be generous and don't push me to the wall."

"At all events you'll not go without seeing the doctor?"

"That I will. I have some experience of him as a questioner in the Scripture-school of a Saturday, and I'll not stand a cross-examination in profane matters from so skilled a hand. Tell him from me that I had one of my flighty fits on me, and that I knew I'd make such a sorry defence if we were to meet, that, in the words of his own song, 'I ran awa' in the morning.'"

She shook her head in silence, and seemed far from satisfied.

"Tell him, however, that I'll go and see Dolly the first day I'm free, and bring him back a full account of her, how she looks, and what she says of herself."

The thought of his return flashed across the poor mother's heart like sunshine over a landscape, spreading light and gladness everywhere. "And when will that be, Tony?" cried she, looking up into his eyes.

"Let me see. To-morrow will be Wednesday."

"No, Tony—Thursday."

"To be sure, Thursday — Thursday, the ninth — Friday, Liverpool; Saturday, London! Sunday will do for a visit to Dolly—I suppose there will be no impropriety in calling on her of a Sunday?"

"The M'Gruders are a Scotch family—I don't know if they'd like it."

"That shall be thought of. Let me see; Monday for the great man, Tuesday and Wednesday to see a little bit of London, and back here by the end of the week."

"Oh! if I thought that, Tony——"

"Well, do think it—believe it, rely upon it. If you like, I'll give up the Tuesday and Wednesday, though I have some

very gorgeous speculations about Westminster Abbey and the Tower, and the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, with the pantomime for a finish in the evening. But you've only to say the word, and I'll start half an hour after I see the Don in Downing Street."

"No, of course not, darling. I'm not so selfish as that; and if you find that London amuses you and is not too expensive—for you know, Tony, what a slender purse we have—stay a week—two weeks, Tony, if you like it."

"What a good little woman it is," said he, pressing her towards him, and the big tears trembled in his eyes and rolled heavily along his cheeks. "Now for the ugly part—the money, I mean."

"I have eleven pounds in the house, Tony, if that will do to take with you."

"Do, mother! Of course it will. I don't mean to spend near so much; but how can you spare such a sum? that's the question."

"I just had it by, Tony, for a rainy day, as they call it, or I meant to have made you a smart present on the fourth of next month, for your birthday—I forget, indeed, what I intended it for," said she, wiping her eyes, "for this sudden notion of yours has driven everything clean out of my head, and all I can think of is if there be buttons on your shirts, and how many pairs of socks you have."

"I'm sure everything is right; it always is. And now go to bed like a dear little woman, and I'll come in and say good-bye before I start in the morning."

"No, no, Tony: I'll be up and make you a cup of tea."

"That you shall not. What a fuss to make of a trip to London, as if I was going to Auckland or the Fijee Islands? By the way, mother, wouldn't you come out to me if the great man gave me something very fine and lucrative?—for I can't persuade myself that he won't make me a governor somewhere."

She could not trust herself to speak, and merely clutched his hand in both her own and held it fast.

"There's another thing," said he, after a short struggle with himself; "there may possibly be notes or messages of one sort or another from Lyle Abbey, and just hint that I've been obliged to leave home for a day or two. You needn't say for where, nor how long; but that I was called away suddenly—too hurriedly to go up and pay my respects, and the rest of it. I'm not quite sure you'll be troubled in this way; but if you should, say what I have told you."

"The doctor will be sorry not to have said good-bye, Tony."

"I may be back again before he need hear of my having gone. And now, good-night, dear mother; I'll come and see you before I start."

When Tony Butler found himself alone in his room, he opened his writing-desk and prepared to write—a task, for him, of no common magnitude and of the very rarest occurrence. What it exacted in the way of strain and effort may be imagined from the swelling of the veins in his forehead, and the crimson patches that formed on his cheeks. "What would I give now," muttered he, "for just ten minutes of ready tact, to express myself suitably—to keep down my own temper, and at the same time make *his* boil over! If I have ten years of life before me, I'd give five of them to be able to do this; but I cannot—I cannot! To say all that I want, and not be a braggart or something worse, requires mind, and judgment, and tact, and twenty other gifts that I have not got; and I have only to picture him going about with my letter in his hand, showing it to every one, with a sneer at my mode of expression—possibly of my spelling! Here goes; my very writing shames me."

"SIR,

"The manner I left your father's house last night would require an apology [I wonder if there are two p's in apology] from me, if I had not a graver one to ask from you. [He read this over fully a dozen times, varying the emphasis, and trying if the meaning it bore, or that he meant it to bear, could be changed by the reading. 'All right,' said he, 'no mistake there.'] There is, however, so much of excuse for your conduct, that you did not know how I was treated by your family—regarded as a friend, and not the Cad you wanted to make me! [Cad reads wrong—vulgar; I suppose it is vulgar, but it means what I intend, and so let it go.] I cannot *make* a quarrel with your father's son. [I'll dash *make*, to show that I could accept one of another's making.] But to avoid the risk, I must avoid the society where I shall meet you. [No; that's not right. Father's son ought to have *him* after it.] Avoid the society where I shall meet him. From this day, therefore, I will not return to the Abbey without I receive that reparation from you which is the right of

"Your faithful servant,
"T. BUTLER."

[I could not write myself Anthony, if I got five pounds for it.]

Ten miles across a stiff country, straight as the crow flies, would not have "taken as much out" of poor Tony as the composition of this elegant epistle; and though he felt a sincere satisfaction at its completion, he was not by any means satisfied that he had achieved a success. "No," muttered he, as he sealed it, "my pen will not be my livelihood, that's certain. If it wasn't for the dear mother's sake, I would see what a musket could do; I'd enlist, to a certainty. It is the best thing for fellows like me." Thus musing and "mooning," he lay down, dressed as he was, and fell asleep. And, as he lay, there came a noiseless step to his door, and the handle turned, and his mother drew nigh his bed, and bent over him. "Poor Tony!" muttered she, as her tears gushed out. "Poor Tony!" what a story in two words was there!—what tender love!—what compassionate sorrow! It was the outburst of a mother's grief for one who was sure to get the worst at the hands of the world!—a cry of anguish for all the sorrows his own warm heart and guileless nature would expose him to—the deceptions, the wrongs, the treacheries that were before him: and yet, in all the selfishness of her love, she would not have had him other than he was! She never wished him to be crafty or worldly-wise. Ten thousand times was he dearer, in all his weakness, than if he had the cunning of the craftiest that ever outschemed their neighbours. "My poor boy," said she, "what hard lessons there are before you! It is well that you have a brave, big heart, as well as a tender one."

He was so like his father, too, as he lay there—no great guarantee for success in life was that!—and her tears fell faster as she looked at him; and fearing that her sobs might awake him, she stole silently away and left the room.

"There's the steam-whistle, mother; I can just see the smoke over the cliff. I'm off," said he, as she had dropped off asleep.

"But your breakfast, Tony; I'll make you a cup of tea."

"Not for the world; I'm late enough as it is. God bless you, little woman. I'll be back before you know that I'm gone. Good-bye."

She could hardly trace the black speck as the boat shot out in the deep gloom of daybreak, and watched it till it rounded the little promontory, when she lost it; and then her sorrow—sorrow that recalled her great desolation—burst forth, and she cried as they only cry who are forsaken. But this was not for long. It was the passion of grief, and her reason soon vanquished it; and, as she dried her tears, she said, "Have I not much to be grateful for? What a noble boy he is, and what a brave good man he may be!"

CHAPTER II.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE IN IRELAND.

The country-house life of Ireland had—and I would say has, if I were not unhappily drawing on my memory—this advantage over that of England, that it was passed in that season when the country offered all that it had of beauty and attraction—when the grove was leafy, and the blossomy fruit-trees vied in gorgeous colour with the flowery beds beneath them—when the blackbird's mellow song rang through the thicket, and the heavy plash of the trout rose above the ripple of the river—when the deep grass waved like a sea under a summer wind, and the cattle, grouped picturesquely, tempered the noonday heat beneath the spreading elms, or stood contemplatively in the stream, happy in their luxurious indolence.

What a wealth of enjoyment does such a season offer! How imperceptibly does the lovely aspect of nature blend itself day by day with every incident of our lives, stealing its peaceful influence over our troubled hearts, blunting the pangs of our disappointments, calming down the anxieties of our ambitions! How pleasant is the companionship of our book, and doubly, trebly delightful the converse of our friend! How gratefully, too, do we imbibe the health that comes with every charm of colour and sound and form and odour, repeating at every step, "How beautiful the world is, and how enjoyable!"

I am not going to disparage—far be it from me—the fox-cover or the grouse-mountain; but, after all, these are the accidents, not the elements, of country life, which certainly ought to be passed when the woods are choral with the thrush, and the air scented with the apple-blossom—when it is sweet to lie under the weeping-willow beside the stream, or stroll at sunset through the grove, to gain that crested ridge where the red horizon can be seen, and watch the great sun as it sinks in splendour.

Lyle Abbey had not many pretensions to beauty of architecture in itself, or to scenery in its neighbourhood. Nor was it

easy to say why a great, bulky, incongruous building, disfigured by painted windows to make it Gothic, should have ever been called an Abbey. It was, however, both roomy and convenient within. There were fine, lofty, spacious reception-rooms, well lighted and ventilated. Wide corridors led to rows of comfortable chambers, where numbers of guests could be accommodated, and in every detail of fitting and furniture, ease and comfort had been studied with a success that attained perfection.

The grounds—a space of several hundred acres—enclosed within a massive wall, had not more pretensions to beauty than the mansion. There were, it is true, grand points of view—noble stretches of shore and sea-coast to be had from certain eminences, and abundant undulations—some of these wild and picturesque enough; but the great element of all was wanting—there was no foliage, or next to none.

Trees will not grow in this inhospitable climate, or only grow in the clefts and valleys; and even there their stunted growth and scathed branches show that the north-west wind has found them out, twisting their boughs uncouthly towards the eastward, and giving them a semblance to some scared and hooded traveller scudding away before a storm.

Vegetation thrives no better. The grass, of sickly yellow, is only fit for sheep, and there are no traces of those vast tracts of verdure which represent culture in the south of Ireland. Wealth had fought out the battle bravely, however, and artificial soils and trees and ornamental shrubs, replaced and replaced by others as they died off, combated the ungrateful influences, and won at last a sort of victory. That is to say, the stranger felt, as he passed the gate, that he was entering what seemed an oasis, so wild and dreary and desolate was the region which stretched away for miles on every side.

Some drives and walks had been designed—what will not landscape gardening do?—with occasional shelter and cover. The majority, however, led over wild, bleak crests—breezy and bracing on fine days, but storm-lashed whenever the wind came, as it will for ten months out of twelve, over the great rolling waters of the Atlantic.

The most striking and picturesque of these walks led along the cliffs over the sea, and indeed so close as to be fenced off by a parapet from the edge of the precipice. It was a costly labour, and never fully carried out—the two miles which had been accomplished figuring for a sum that Sir Arthur declared would have bought the fee-simple of a small estate. It was along this pathway that Captain Lyle sauntered with his two sisters on

the morning after his arrival. It was the show spot of the whole demesne; and certainly, as regards grand effects of sea-view and coast-line, not to be surpassed in the kingdom. They had plotted together in the morning how they would lead Mark in this direction, and, suddenly placing him in one of the most striking spots, enjoy all his wonderment and admiration; for Mark Lyle had seldom been at home since his "Harrow" days, and the Abbey and its grounds were almost strange to him.

"What are the rocks yonder, Bella?" said he, listlessly, as he puffed his cigar and pointed seaward.

"The Skerries, Mark; see how the waves beat over that crag. They tried to build a lighthouse there, but the foundations were soon swept away."

"And what is that? It looks like a dismantled house."

"That is the ruined castle of Dunluce. It belonged to the Antrim family."

"Good heavens! what a dreary region it all is!" cried he, interrupting. "I declare to you, South Africa is a garden compared to this."

"Oh, Mark, for shame?" said his elder sister. "The kingdom has nothing grander than this coast-line from Portrush to Fairhead."

"I'm no judge of its grandeur, but I tell you one thing,—I'd not live here—no, nor would I contract to live six months in a year here—to have the whole estate. This is a fine day, I take it."

"It is a glorious day," said Bella.

"Well, it's just as much as we can do to keep our legs here; and certainly your flattened bonnets and dishevelled hair are no allies to your good looks."

"Our looks are not in question," said the elder, tartly. "We were talking of the scenery; and I defy you to tell me where, in all your travels, you have seen its equal."

"I'll tell you one thing, Alice, it's deuced dear at the price we are looking at it; I mean, at the cost of this precious bit of road we stand on. Where did the governor get his engineer?"

"It was Tony planned this—every yard of it," said Bella, proudly.

"And who is Tony, pray?" said he, superciliously.

"You met him last night—young Butler. He dined here, and sat next Alice."

"You mean that great hulking fellow, with the attempt at a straw-coloured moustache, who directed the fireworks."

"I mean that very good-looking young man who coolly removed

the powder-flask that you had incautiously forgotten next the rocket-train," said Mrs. Trafford.

"And that was Tony!" said he, with a faint sneer.

"Yes, Mark, that was Tony; and if you want to disparage him, let it be to some other than Bella and myself; for he is an old playmate that we both esteem highly, and wish well to."

"I am not surprised at it," said he, languidly. "I never saw a snob yet that couldn't find a woman to defend him; and this fellow, it would seem, has got two."

"Tony a snob!"

"Tony Butler a snob! Just the very thing he is not. Poor boy, there never was one to whom the charge was less applicable."

"Don't be angry, Alice, because I don't admire your rustic friend. In my ignorance I fancied he was a pretentious sort of bumpkin, who talked of things a little out of his reach—such as yachting, steeple-chasing, and the like. Isn't he the son of some poor dependent of the governor's?"

"Nothing of the kind; his mother is a widow, with very narrow means, I believe; but his father was a colonel, and a distinguished one. As to dependence, there is no such relation between us."

"I am glad of that, for I rather set him down last night."

"Set him down! What do you mean?"

"He was talking somewhat big of 'cross-country riding, and I asked him about his stable, and if his cattle ran more on bone than blood."

"Oh, Mark, you did not do that?" cried Bella, anxiously.

"Yes; and when I saw his confusion, I said, 'You must let me walk over some morning, and have a look at your nags; for I know from the way you speak of horseflesh I shall see something spicy.'"

"And what answer did he make?" asked Bella, with an eager look.

"He got very red, crimson indeed, and stammered out, 'You may spare yourself the walk, sir; for the only quadruped I have is a spaniel, and she is blind from age, and stupid.'"

"Who was the snob there, Mark?" said Mrs. Trafford. angrily.

"Alice!" said he, raising his eyebrows, and looking at her with a cold astonishment.

"I beg pardon in all humility, Mark," said she, hastily. "I am very sorry to have offended you; but I forgot myself. I

fancied you had been unjust to one we all value very highly, and my tongue outran me."

"These sort of fellows," continued he, as if unheeding her excuses, "only get a footing in houses where there are no men, or at least none of their own age; and thus they are deemed Admirable Crichtons because they can row, or swim, or kill a salmon. Now, when a gentleman does these things, and fifty more of the same sort, nobody knows it. You'll see in a day or two here a friend of mine, a certain Norman Maitland, that will beat your young savage at everything—ride, row, walk, shoot or single-stick him for whatever he pleases; and yet I'll wager you'll never know from Maitland's manner or conversation that he ever took the lock of a canal in a leap, or shot a jaguar single-handed."

"Is your phœnix really coming here?" asked Mrs. Trafford, only too glad to get another channel for the conversation.

"Yes; here is what he writes," and he took a note from his pocket. "'I forget, my dear Lyle, whether your château be beside the lakes of Killarney, the groves of Blarney, or what other picturesque celebrity your island claims; but I have vowed you a visit of two days—three, if you insist—but not another if you die for it.' Isn't he droll?"

"He is insufferably impudent. There is 'a snob' if there ever was one," cried Alice, exultingly.

"Norman Maitland, Norman Maitland a snob! Why, my dear sister, what will you say next? Ask the world its opinion of Norman Maitland, for he is just as well known in St. Petersburg as Piccadilly, and the ring of his rifle is as familiar on the Himalayas as on a Scotch mountain. There is not a gathering for pleasure, nor a country-house party in the kingdom, would not deem themselves thrice fortunate to secure a passing visit from him, and he is going to give us three days."

"Has he been long in your regiment, Mark?" asked Mrs. Trafford.

"Maitland has never served with us; he joined us in Simla as a member of our mess, and we call him 'of ours' because he never would dine with the 9th or the 50th. Maitland wouldn't take the command of a division to have the bore and worry of soldiering—and why should he?"

It was not without astonishment Mark's sisters saw their brother, usually cold and apathetic in his tone, so warmly enthusiastic about his friend Maitland, of whom he continued to talk with rapture, recalling innumerable traits of character and temper, but which unhappily only testified to the success with

which he had practised towards the world an amount of impertinence and presumption that seemed scarcely credible.

"If he only be like your portrait, I call him downright detestable," said Mrs. Trfford.

"Yes, but you are dying to see him all the same, and so is Bella."

"Let me answer for myself, Mark," said Isabella, "and assure you that, so far from curiosity, I feel an actual repugnance to the thought of meeting him. I don't really know whether the condescending politeness of such a man, or his cool impertinence, is the greater insult."

"Poor Maitland, how will you encounter what is prepared for you?" said he, mockingly; "but courage, girls, I think he'll survive it—only I beg no unnecessary cruelty—no harshness beyond what his own transgressions may call down upon him; and don't condemn him merely, and for no other reason, than because he is the friend of your brother." And with this speech he turned short round and ascended a steep path at his side, and was lost to their view in a minute.

"Isn't he changed, Alice? Did you ever see any one so altered?"

"Not a bit changed, Bella; he is exactly what he was at the gammar-school, at Harrow, and at Sandhurst—very intolerant to the whole world, as a compensation for the tyranny some one, boy or man as it may be, exercises over him. All his good qualities lie under this veil, and so it was ever with him."

"I wish his friend was not coming."

"And I wish that he had not sent away *ours*, for I'm sure Tony would have been up here before this if something unusual had not occurred."

"Here's a strange piece of news for you, girls," said Sir Arthur, coming towards them. "Tony Butler left for Liverpool in the packet this morning. Barnes, who was seeing his brother off, saw him mount the side of the steamer with his portmanteau in his hand. Is it not singular he should have said nothing about this last night?"

The sisters looked with a certain secret intelligence at each other, but did not speak. "Except, perhaps, he may have told you girls," added he quickly, and catching the glance that passed between them.

"No, papa," said Alice, "he said nothing of his intention to us; indeed he was to have ridden over with me this morning to Mount-Leslie, and ask about those private theatricals that have

been concerted there for the last two years, but of which all the performers either marry or die off during the rehearsals."

"Perhaps this all-accomplished friend of Mark's, who comes here by the end of the week, will give the project his assistance. If the half of what Mark says of him be true, we shall have for our guest one of the wonders of Europe."

"I wish the Leslies would take me on a visit till he goes," said Alice.

"And I," said Bella, "have serious thoughts of a sore throat that will confine me to my room. Brummelism—and I hate it—it is just Brummelism—is somewhat out of vogue at this time of day. It wants the prestige of originality, and it wants the high patronage that once covered it; but there is no sacrifice of self-respect in being amused by it, so let us at least enjoy a hearty laugh, which is more than the adorers of the great Beau himself ever acquired at his expense."

"At all events, girls, don't desert the field and leave me alone with the enemy; for this man is just coming when we shall have no one here, as ill-luck would have it."

"Don't say ill luck, papa," interposed Bella; "for if he be like what we suspect, he would outrage and affront every one of our acquaintance."

"Three days are not an eternity," said he half gaily, "and we must make the best of it."

CHAPTER III.

A VERY "FINE GENTLEMAN."

One word about Mr. Norman Maitland, of whom this history will have something more to say hereafter. He was one of those men, too few in number to form a class, but of which nearly every nation on the Continent has some examples—men with good manners and good means, met with always in the great world—at home in the most exclusive circles, much thought of, much caressed; but of whom, as to family, friends, or belongings, no one can tell anything. They who can recall the society of Paris some forty years back, will remember such a man in Montrond. Rich, accomplished, handsome, and with the most fascinating address, Montrond won his way into circles the barriers to which extended even to royalty; and yet all the world were asking, "Who is he?—who knows him?" Maitland was another of these. Men constantly canvassed him, agreed that he was not of these "Maitlands" or of those—that nobody was at school with him—none remembered him at Eton or at Rugby. He first burst upon life at Cambridge, where he rode boldly, was a first-rate cricketer, gave splendid wine parties, wrote a prize poem, and disappeared none ever knew whence or wherefore. He was elected for a borough, but only was seen twice or thrice in the House. He entered the army, but left without joining his regiment. He was to be heard of in every city of Europe, living sumptuously, playing high—more often a loser than a winner. His horses, his carriages, his liveries, were models; and wherever he went his track could be marked in the host of imitators he left behind him. For some four or five years back all that was known of him was in some vague paragraph appearing from time to time that some tourist had met him in the Rocky Mountains, or that he had been seen in Circassia. An archduke on his travels had partaken of his hospitality in the extreme north of India; and one of our naval commanders spoke of dining on board his yacht in the Southern Pacific. Those who were curious about him learnt that he was beginning to show some slight touches

of years—how he had grown fatter, some said more serious and grave—and a few censoriously hinted that his beard and mustaches were a shade darker than they used to be. Maitland, in short, was just beginning to drop out of people's minds, when he reappeared once more in England, looking in reality very little altered, save that his dark complexion seemed a little darker from travel, and he was slightly, very slightly, bald on the top of the head.

It was remarked, however, that his old pursuits, which were purely those of pleasure or dissipation, had not, to all appearance, the same hold on him as before. "He never goes down to Tattersall's," "I don't think I have seen him once at the opera," "He has given up play altogether," were the rumours one heard on all sides; and so it was that the young generation, who had only heard of but never seen him, were sorely disappointed in meeting the somewhat quiet, reserved-looking, haughty man, whose wild feats and eccentricities had so often amused them, but who now gave no evidence of being other than a cold, well-bred gentlemen.

It was when hastily passing through London, on his return from India, that Mark Lyle had met him, and Maitland had given him a half-careless promise to come and see him. "I want to go across to Ireland," said he, "and whenever town gets hot, I'll run over." Mark would have heard the same words from a royal duke with less pride, for he had been brought up in his Sandhurst days with great traditions of Maitland; and the favour the great man had extended to him in India, riding his horses, and once sharing his bungalow, had so redounded to his credit in the regiment, that even a tyrannical major had grown bland and gentle to him.

Mark was, however, far from confident that he could rely on his promise. It seemed too bright a prospect to be possible. Maitland, who had never been in Ireland—whom one could, as Mark thought, no more fancy in Ireland than he could imagine a London fine lady passing her mornings in a poor-house, or inspecting the coarse labours of a sewing-school,—*he* coming over to see him! What a triumph, were it only to be true! and now the post told him it was true, and that Maitland would arrive at the Abbey on Saturday. Now, when Mark had turned away so hastily and left his sisters, he began to regret that he had announced the approaching arrival of his friend with such a flourish of trumpets. "I ought to have said nothing whatever about him. I ought simply to have announced him as a man very well off, and much asked out, and

have left the rest to fortune. All I have done by my ill-judged praise has been to awaken prejudice against him, and make them eager to detect flaws, if they can, in his manner—at all events in his temper." The longer he thought over these things the more they distressed him; and, at last, so far from being overjoyed, as he expected, at the visit of his distinguished friend, he saw the day of his coming dawn with dismay and misgiving. Indeed, had such a thing as putting him off been possible, it is likely he would have done it.

The long-looked for and somewhat feared Saturday came at last, and with it came a note of a few lines from Maitland. They were dated from a little village in Wicklow, and ran thus:—

"Dear L.—I have come down here with a Yankee, whom I chanced upon as a travelling companion, to look at the mines—gold, they call them; and if I am not seduced into a search after nuggets, I shall be with you some time—I cannot define the day—next week. The country is prettier and the people less barbarous than I expected; but I hear your neighbourhood will compensate me for both disappointments.—Yours, N.M."

"Well! are we to send the carriage into Coleraine for him, Mark?" asked Sir Arthur, as his son continued to read the letter, without lifting his eyes.

"No," said Mark, in some confusion. "This is a sort of put-off. He cannot be here for several days. Some friend or acquaintance has dragged him off in another direction;" and he crushed the note in his hand, afraid of being asked to read or to show it.

"The house will be full after Tuesday, Mark," said Lady Lyle. "The Gores, and the Masseys, and the M'Clintocks will all be here, and Gambier Graham threatens us with himself and his two daughters."

"If they come," broke in Mark, "you'll have my rooms at your disposal."

"I delight in them," said Mrs. Trafford; "and if your elegantly fastidious friend should really come, I count upon them to be perfect antidotes to all his impertinence. Sally Graham, and the younger one, whom her father calls 'Dick' are downright treasures when one is in want of a forlorn hope to storm town-bred pretension."

"If Maitland is to be baited, Alice, I'd rather the bull-ring was somewhere else," said her brother, angrily.

"The real question is, shall we have room for all these people and their followers?" said Lady Lyle.

"I repeat," said Mark, "that if the Graham girls are to be here, I'm off. They are the most insufferably obtrusive and aggressive women I ever met; and I'd rather take boat and pass a month at the Hebrides than stop a week in the house with them."

"I think Sally thrashed you when you came home once for the holidays," said Mrs. Trafford, laughing.

"No, Alice, it was Beck," broke in her sister. "She has a wonderful story of what she calls a left-hander, that she planted under his eye. She tells it still with great gusto, but owns that Mark fought on very bravely for two rounds after."

"And are these the people you expect me to show Maitland?" said Mark, rising from the table; "I'd rather, fifty times rather, write and say, 'We cannot receive you; our house is full, and will be for a month to come.'"

"Yes, dear Mark, that is the really sensible way to look at it. Nobody now-a-days has any scruple in such matters. One is invited from Monday to Thursday, but on no possible pretext can he stay to Friday." And so Mrs. Trafford ran away, heaping, by apparent consolations, coals of fire on his angry head.

"I think you had better get Alice to write the letter herself," said Bella; "I'm sure she will do it with great tact and discretion."

"Pray do," added she. "Entrust me with the despatch, and I promise you the negotiation will be completed then and there."

"It is quite bad enough to shut the door in a man's face, without jeering at him out of the window," said Mark, and he dashed out of the room in a rage.

"I wish he had shown us his friend's note," said Alice. "I'm quite certain that his anger has far more to do with that epistle than with any of our comments upon it."

"I'm very sorry Mark should be annoyed," said Bella; "but I'm selfish enough to own that, if we escape Mr. Maitland's visit, I shall deem the bargain a good one."

"I suspect Mr. Maitland does not intend to honour us by his company, and that we may spare ourselves all the embarrassment of preparing for it," said Lady Lyle. And now the three ladies set themselves to consider in committee that oft-vexed problem of how to make a country-house hold more people than it had room for, and how to persuade the less distin-

guished of the guests that they are "taking out" in cordiality all that their reception wants in convenience. One difficulty presented itself at every step, and in a variety of shapes. Never before had the Abbey been full of visitors without Tony Butler being there to assist in their amusement—Tony equally at home on land and on sea—the cavalier of young ladies—the safe coachman of mammas—the guide to all that was noteworthy—the fisherman, the yachtsman whom no weather disconcerted, no misadventure could provoke — so good-tempered and so safe; ay, so safe! for Tony never wanted to flirt with the young heiress, nor teach her schoolboy brother to smoke a short pipe. He had neither the ambition to push his fortune unfairly, nor to attach his junior to him by unworthy means. And the sisters ran over his merits, and grew very enthusiastic about traits in him, which by inference, they implied were not the gifts of others nearer home.

"I wish, papa, you would ride over and see Mrs. Butler, and ask when Tony is expected back again."

"Or if," added Mrs. Trafford—"or if we could get him back by writing, and saying how much we want him."

"I know I'll never venture on Soliman till Tony has had a hand on him."

"And those chestnuts mamma wants for the low phaeton—who is to break them now?" cried Bella.

"I only heard yesterday," said Sir Arthur, "that the *Mermaid's* sails were all cut up. Tony was going to make a schooner of her, it seems; and there she is now, dismantled, and not one of us able to put her in commission again."

"I declare it sounds absurd," broke in Lady Lyle, "but I fancy the garden is beginning to look neglected already. Certainly I never saw Mr. Graft there the whole morning; and he would not have dared to absent himself if Tony were here."

"I'd go over willingly and see his mother," said Sir Arthur; "but as Tony did not confide to us his intended journey, but set off without a word, it would have the appearance of a certain prying curiosity on my part were I to ask after him, and when he is expected home again."

"Not if you were to say frankly that we wanted him, and couldn't get on without him, papa," said Alice. "I'd have no shame in saying that we are perfectly helpless without his skill, his courage, his ready wit, and his good nature."

"Why not secure all those perfections beyond risk, Alice?" said Sir Arthur, laughing.

"How so?—only tell me."

"Marry him."

"First of all, papa, he might not marry *me;* and, secondly, if he should, it might not be the way to insure the perpetuity I covet. You know what Swift says of the 'promising' Princes and the 'bad' Kings the world is full of?"

"I protest," said Lady Lyle, haughtily, "I have a great regard for young Butler; but it has never gone the length of making me desire him for a son-in-law.

"Meanwhile, papa—for we have quite time enough to think over the marriage—pray let me order them to saddle Peter for you, and ride over to the Burnside."

"Do so, Alice; I'm quite ready; but, first of all, give me my instructions."

"We want Tony," broke in Bella.

"Yes; and insist on having him. He must be here by Monday night or Tuesday morning, if it cost an express to go after him."

"We ought to bear in mind, girls, that Tony has not left home in pursuit of pleasure. The poor fellow has had some call of urgency or necessity, and our selfishness must not go the length of a cruelty."

"But with your nice tact, papa, you'll find out all that; you'll learn, in the course of conversation, whether anything of importance has called him away, or whether it be not, as I half suspect, a sort of passing caprice." And she looked significantly at Bella, and left her sentence unfinished.

"Do you know of anything that should induce you to believe this, Alice?"

"Nothing more than a chance word that dropped from Mark this morning. He took it into his head last night that poor Tony was presumptuous, and gave himself airs—Tony! of all creatures in the world;—and so the great hussar, in the plenitude of his regimental experiences, essayed what he called 'to put him down!' Now, the chances are that this may have occasioned some unpleasantness, and it is not in the least unlikely may have led to Tony's departure."

"You must be right, Alice; and since we have been standing here at the window, I saw Mrs. Butler's herd give Mark a letter, which, after reading, he crushed impatiently in his hand and thrust into his pocket. This decides me at once. I will go down to Mrs. Butler's without delay."

"Please explain that I have not called, solely because the carriage-road is so bad. The drive down through that forest

of fern and reeds is like a horrid nightmare on me," said Lady Lyle.

"Well I think I can apologise for your absence without telling her that she lives in an unapproachable wilderness," said he, laughing; "and as she cares little for visiting or being visited, the chances are my task will be an easy one."

"Would you like me to go with you, papa!" asked Alice.

"Yes, by all means; but stay," added he, quickly, "it might possibly be better not to come; if anything unpleasant should have occurred between Mark and Tony, she will have less reluctance to speak of it when we are alone."

They all agreed that this was well thought of, and soon after saw him set out on his mission, their best wishes for his success following him.

Sir Arthur pondered as he went over what he should say, and how he would meet the remarks he deemed it likely she would make to him. Without being in the least what is called a person of superior abilities, Mrs. Butler was a somewhat hard-headed woman, whose North of Ireland caution and shrewdness stood her in stead for higher qualities; and if they would not have guided her in great difficulties, she had the good fortune or the prudence to escape from such. He knew this; and he knew besides that there pertains to a position of diminished means and station a peculiar species of touchy pride, always suggesting to its possessor the suspicion that this or that liberty would never have been taken in happier days, and thus to regard the most well-meant counsels and delicately conveyed advice as uncalled-for interference, or worse.

It was after much consideration he saw himself at the little wicket of the garden, where he dismounted, and, fastening his bridle to the gate, knocked at the door. Though he could distinctly hear the sound of voices within, and the quick movement of feet, his summons was unanswered, and he was about to repeat it for the third time when the door was opened.

"Is your mistress at home, Jeanie?" said he, recognising with a smile the girl's curtsey to him.

"Yes, sir, she's at home," was the dry answer.

"Will you just tell her, then, that Sir Arthur Lyle would take it as a great favour if she'd permit him to speak to her."

The girl disappeared with the message, but did not return again for several minutes; and when she did, she looked slightly agitated. "My mistress is very sorry, sir, but she canna see ye the day; it's a sort of a headache she has."

"Mr. Anthony, is he at home?" asked he, curious to remark the effect of his question.

"He's no just at hame the noo," was the cautious reply.

"He has not been up at the Abbey to-day," said he, carelessly; "but to be sure, I came through the 'bracken,' and might have missed him."

A little dry nod of the head, to acknowledge that this or anything else was possible, was all that his speech elicited.

"Say that I was very sorry, Jeanie, that Mrs. Butler could not see me, and sorrier for the reason; but that I hope to-morrow or next day to be more fortunate. Not," added he, after a second thought, "that what I wanted to speak of is important, except to myself; don't forget this, Jeanie."

"I winna forget," said she, and curtseying again, closed the door. Sir Arthur rode slowly back to report that his embassy had failed.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME NEW ARRIVALS.

Day after day went over, and no tidings of Maitland. When the post came in of a morning, and no letter in his hand appeared, Mark's impatience was too perceptible to make any comment for his sisters either safe or prudent. Nor was it till nigh a week passed over that he himself said, "I wonder what has become of Maitland? I hope he's not ill." None followed up the theme, and it dropped. The expected guests began to drop in soon after, and, except by Mark himself, Mr. Norman Maitland was totally forgotten. The visitors were for the most part squires and their wives and families; solid, well-to-do gentlemen, whose chief objects in life were green crops and the poor-law. Their talk was either of mangold or guano, swedes or the union, just as their sons' conversation ranged over dogs, horses, meets, and covers; and the ladies disported in toilette, and such details of the Castle drawing-rooms as the Dublin papers afforded. There were Mr. and Mrs. Warren, with two daughters and a son; and the Hunters, with two sons and a daughter. There were Colonel Hoyle and Mrs. Hoyle, from regimental head-quarters, Belfast; and Groves Bulkney, the member for the county, who had come over, in the fear of an approaching dissolution of Parliament, to have a look at his constituents. He was a Tory, who always voted with the Whigs, a sort of politician in great favour with the north of Ireland, and usually supposed to have much influence with both parties. There were Masseys from Tipperary, and M'Clintocks from Louth; and, lastly, herald of their approach, three large coffin-shaped trunks, undeniably of sea-origin, with the words "Cap. Gambier Graham, R.N.," marked on them, which arrived by a carrier, with three gun-cases and an immense array of fishing-tackle, gaffs, and nets.

"So I see those odious Grahams are coming," said Mark, ill-humouredly, as he met his elder sister in the hall. "I declare, if it were not that Maitland might chance to arrive in my absence, I'd set off this very morning."

"I assure you, Mark, you are all wrong; the girls are no favourites of mine; but looking to the staple of our other guests, the Grahams are perfect boons from heaven. The Warrens, with their infant school; and Mrs. Maxwell, with her quarrel with the bishop; and the Masseys, with their pretension about that daughter who married Lord Claude Somebody, are so terribly tiresome, that I long for the racket and noise of those bustling young women, who will at least dispel our dulness."

"At the cost of our good breeding."

"At all events they are jolly and good-tempered girls. We have known them for——"

"Oh, don't say how long. The younger one is two years older than myself."

"No, Mark, Beck is exactly your own age."

"Then I'm determined to call myself five-and-thirty the first opportunity I have. She shall have three years tacked to her for the coming into the world along with me."

"Sally is only thirty-four."

"Only! the idea of saying *only* to thirty-four."

"They don't look within eight or nine years of it, I declare. I suppose you will scarcely detect the slightest change in them."

"So much the worse. Any change would improve them, in my eyes."

"And the Captain, too. He, I believe is now Commodore."

"I perceive there is no change in the mode of travel," said Mark, pointing to the trunks. "The heavy luggage used always to arrive the day before they drove up in their vile Irish jaunting car. Do they still come in that fashion?"

"Yes; and I really believe with the same horse they had long, long ago."

"A flea-bitten mare with a twisted tail?"

"The very same," cried she, laughing. "I'll certainly tell Beck how well you remember their horse. She'll take it as a flattery."

"Tell her what you like—she'll soon find out how much flattery she has to expect from *me!*" After a short pause, in which he made two ineffectual attempts to light a cigar, and slightly burned his fingers, he said, "I'd not for a hundred pounds that Maitland had met them here. With simply stupid country gentry, he'd not care to notice their ways nor pay attention to their humdrum habits; but these Grahams, with all their flagrant vulgarity, will be a temptation too irresistible,

and he will leave this to associate us for ever in his mind with the two most ill-bred women in creation."

"You are quite unfair, Mark; they are greatly liked—at least, people are glad to have them; and if we only had poor Tony Butler here, who used to manage them to perfection, they'd help us wonderfully with all the dulness around us."

"Thank heaven we have not. I'd certainly not face such a constellation as the three of them. I tell you frankly, that I'd pack my portmanteau and go over to Scotland if that fellow were to come here again."

"You're not likely to be driven to such an extremity, I suspect; but here comes papa, and I think he has been down at the Burnside; let us hear what news he has."

"It has no interest for *me*," said he, walking away, while she hastened out to meet Sir Arthur.

"No tidings, Alice—at least, none that I can learn. Mrs. Butler's headache still prevents her seeing me, though I could wager I saw her at work in the garden when I turned off the high road."

"How strange! You suspect that she avoids you?"

"I am certain of it; and I went round by the minister's, thinking to have a talk with Stewart, and hear something that might explain this; but he was engaged in preparing his sermon, and begged me to excuse him."

"I wish we could get to the bottom of this mystery. Would she receive *me*, do you think, if I were to go over to the cottage?"

"Most likely not. I suspect whatever it be that has led to this estrangement will be a passing cloud; let us wait and see. Who are those coming up the bend of the road? The horse looks fagged enough, certainly."

"The Grahams, I declare! Oh, I must find Mark, and let him be caught here when they arrive."

"Don't let the Commodore get at *me* before dinner, that's all I ask," said Sir Arthur, as he rode round to the stables.

When Alice entered the house, she found Mark at the open window watching with an opera-glass the progress of the jaunting-car as it slowly wound along the turns of the approach, lost and seen as the woods intervened or opened.

"I cannot make it out at all, Alice," said he; "there are two two men and two women, as well as I can see, besides the driver."

"No, no; they have their maid, whom you mistake for a man."

"Then the maid wears a wideawake a and paletot. Look, and see for yourself," and he handed her the glass.

"I declare you are right—it is a man; he is beside Beck. Sally is on the side with her father."

"Are they capable of bringing some one along with them?" cried he, in horror. "Do you think they would dare to take such a liberty as that here?"

"I'm certain they would not. It must be Kenrose the apothecary, who was coming to see one of the maids, or one of our own people, or——" Her further conjectures were cut short by the outburst of so strong an expletive as cannot be repeated; and Mark, pale as death, stammered out, "It's Maitland! Norman Maitland!"

"But how, Mark, do they know him?"

"Confound them! who can tell how it happened," said he, "I'll not meet him—I'll leave the house—I'll not face such an indignity."

"But remember, Mark, none of us know your friend; we have not so much as seen him; and as he was to meet these people, it's all the better they came as acquaintances."

"That's all very fine," said he, angrily; "you can be beautifully philosophical about it, all because you haven't to go back to a mess-table and be badgered by all sorts of allusions and references to Maitland's capital story."

"Here they are, here they are!" cried Alice, and the next moment she was warmly embracing those dear friends to whose failings she was nowise blind, however ardent her late defence of them. Mark, meanwhile, had advanced towards Maitland, and gave him as cordial a welcome as he could command. "My sister Mrs. Trafford—Mr. Maitland," said he, and Alice gave her hand with a graceful cordiality to the new guest

"I declare Mark is afraid that I'll kiss him," cried Beck. "Courage, *mon ami*, I'll not expose you in public."

"How are you? how are you?" cried the Commodore; "brown, brown, very brown; Indian sun. Lucky if the mischief is only skin-deep."

"Shake hands, Mark," said Sally, in a deep masculine voice; "don't bear malice though I did pitch you out of the boat that day."

Mark was, however, happily, too much engaged with his friend to have heard the speech. He was eagerly listening to Maitland's account of his first meeting with the Grahams.

"My lucky star was in the ascendant, for there I stood," said Maitland, "in the great square of Bally—Bally——"

"Ballymena," broke in Beck; "and there's no great square in the place; but you stood in a very dirty stable-yard, in a much greater passion than such a fine gentleman should ever give way to."

"Calling, 'A horse! a horse! My kingdom for a horse!'"

"It was 'a chaise and pair' *I* heard, and you were well laughed at for your demand. The baker offered you a seat, which you rejected with dismay; and, to tell the truth, it was half in the hope of witnessing another outburst of your indignation that I went across and said, 'Would you accept a place beside me, sir?'"

"And was I not overwhelmed with joy—was it not in a transport of gratitude that I embraced your offer?"

"I know you very nearly embraced my maid as you lifted her off the car."

"And, by the way, where is Patience?" asked Mrs. Trafford.

"She's coming on, some fashion, with the swell's luggage," added she, dropping her voice to a whisper—"eight trunks, eleven carpet-bags, and four dressing-boxes, besides what I thought was a show-box, but is only a shower-bath."

"My people will take every care of her," said Maitland.

"Is Fenton still with you?" asked Mark.

"Yes; he had some thoughts of leaving me lately; he said he thought he'd like to retire—that he'd take a consulate or a barrack-mastership—but I laughed him out of it."

Sir Arthur and Lady Lyle had now come down to welcome the new arrivals; and greetings and welcomes and felicitations resounded on all sides.

"Come along with me, Maitland," said Mark, hurrying his friend away. "Let me show you your quarters;" and as he moved off he added, "what a piece of ill-luck it was that you should have chanced upon the greatest bores of our acquaintance!—people so detestable to me, that if I hadn't been expecting your visit I'd have left the house this morning."

"I don't know that," said Maitland, half languidly; "perhaps I have grown more tolerant, or more indifferent—what may be another name for the same thing—but I rather liked the young women. Have we any more stairs to mount?"

"No; here you are;" and Mark reddened a little at the impertinent question. "I have put you here, because this was an old *garçon* apartment I had arranged for myself; and you have your bath-room yonder, and your servant, on the other side of the terrace."

"It's all very nice, and seems very quiet," said Maitland.

"As to that, you'll not have to complain: except the plash of the sea at the foot of those cliffs, you'll never hear a sound here."

"It's a bold thing of you to make me so comfortable, Lyle. When I wrote to you to say I was coming, my head was full of what we call country-house life, with all its bustle and racket—noisy breakfasts and noisier luncheons, with dinners as numerous as *tables d'hôte*. I never dreamed of such a paradise as this. May I dine here all alone when in the humour?"

"You are to be all your own master, and to do exactly as you please. I need not say, though, that I will scarce forgive you if you grudge us your company."

"I'm not always up to society. I'm growing a little footsore with the world, Lyle, and like to lie down in the shade."

"Lewis told me you were writing a book—a novel, I think he said," said Mark.

"I write a book! I never thought of such a thing. Why, my dear Lyle, the fellows who—like myself—know the whole thing, never write! Haven't you often remarked that a man who has passed years of life in a foreign city loses all power of depicting its traits of peculiarity, just because, from habit, they have ceased to strike him as strange? So it is. Your thorough man of the world knows life too well to describe it. No, no; it is the creature that stands furtively in the flats that can depict what goes on in the comedy. Who are your guests?"

Mark ran over the names carelessly.

"All new to me, and I to them. Don't introduce, me Mark; leave me to shake down in any bivouac that may offer. I'll not be a bear if people don't bait me. You understand?"

"Perhaps I do."

"There are no foreigners? that's a loss. They season society though they never make it, and there's an evasive softness in French that contributes much to the courtesies of life. So it is—the habits of the Continent to the wearied man of the world are just like loose slippers to a gouty man. People learn to be intimate there without being over familiar—a great point, Mark."

"By the way—talking of that same familiarity—there was a young fellow who got the habit of coming here, before I returned from India, on such easy terms, that I found him installed like one of ourselves. He had his room, his saddle-horse, a servant that waited on him, and who did his orders, as

if he were a son of the family. I cut the thing very short when I came home, by giving him a message to do some trifling service, just as I would have told my valet. He resented, left the house, and sent me this letter next morning."

"Not much given to letter-writing, I see," muttered Maitland, as he read over Tony's epistle; "but still the thing is reasonably well put, and means to say, 'give me a chance, and I'm ready for you.' What's the name? Buller?"

"No; Butler—Tony Butler they call him here."

"What Butlers does he belong to?" asked Maitland, with more interest in his manner.

"No Butlers at all—at least none of any standing. My sisters, who swear by this fellow, will tell you that his father was a colonel and C.B., and I don't know what else; and that his uncle was, and I believe is, a certain Sir Omerod Butler, minister or ex-minster somewhere; but I have my doubts of all the fine parentage, seeing that this youth lives with his mother in a cottage here that stands in the rent-roll at £18 per annum."

"There is a Sir Omerod Butler," said Maitland, with a slow, thoughtful enunciation.

"But, if he be this youth's uncle, he never knows nor recognizes him. My sister, Mrs. Trafford, has the whole story of these people, and will be charmed to tell it to you."

"I have no curiosity in the matter," said Maitland, languidly. "The world is really so very small, that by the time a man reaches my age, he knows every one that is to be known in it. And so," said he, as he looked again at the letter, "he went off, after sending you the letter?"

"Yes, he left this the same day."

"And where for?"

"I never asked. The girls, I suppose, know all about his movements. I overhear mutterings about poor Tony at every turn. Tell me Maitland," added he, with more earnestness, "is this letter a thing I can notice? Is it not a regular provocation?"

"It is, and it is not," said Maitland, as he lighted a cigar, puffing the smoke leisurely between his words "If he were a man that you would chance upon at every moment, meet at your club, or sit opposite at dinner the thing would fester into a sore in its own time; but here is a fellow, it may be, that you'll never see again, or if so, but on distant terms: I'd say, put the document with your tailor's bills, and think no more of it."

Lyle nodded an assent, and was silent.

"I say, Lyle," added Maitland, after a moment, "I'd advise

you never to speak of the fellow—never discuss him. If your sisters bring up his name, let it drop unnoticed; it is the only way to put the tombstone on such memories. What is your dinner-hour here?"

"Late enough, even for you—eight."

"That *is* civilized, I'll come down—at least to day," said he after a brief pause; "and now leave me."

When Lyle withdrew, Maitland leaned on the window-sill, and ranged his eyes over the bold coast-line beneath him. It was not, however, to admire the bold promontory of Fairhead, or the sweeping shore that shelved at its base; nor was it to gaze the rugged outline of those perilous rocks which stretched from the Causeway far into the open sea;—his mind was far far away from the spot, deep in cares and wiles and schemes, for his was an intriguing head, and had its own store of knaveries.

CHAPTER V.

IN LONDON.

SEEKING one's fortune is a very gambling sort of affair. It is leaving so much to chance—trusting so implicitly to what is called "luck," that it makes all individual exertion a merely secondary process—a kind of "auxiliary screw" to aid the gale of Fortune. It was pretty much in this spirit that Tony Butler arrived in London, nor did the aspect of that mighty sea of humanity serve to increase his sense of self-reliance. It was not merely his loneliness that he felt in that great crowd, but it was his utter inutility—his actual worthlessness—to all others. If the gamester's sentiment, to try his luck, was in his heart, it was the spirit of a very poor gambler, who had but one "throw" to risk on fortune; and, thus thinking, he set out for Downing Street.

If he was somewhat disappointed in the tumble-down ruinous old mass of building which held the state secrets of the empire, he was not the less awe-struck as he found himself at the threshold where the great men who guide empires were accustomed to pass in. With a bold effort he swung back the glass door of the inner hall, and found himself in presence of a very well-whiskered, imposing-looking man, who, seated indolently in a deep arm-chair, was busily engaged in reading the *Times*. A glance over the top of the paper was sufficient to assure this great official that it was not necessary to interrupt his perusal of the news on the stranger's account, and so he read on undisturbed.

"I have a letter here for Sir Harry Elphinstone," began Tony; "can I deliver it to him?"

"You can leave it in that rack yonder," said the other, pointing to a glass-case attached to the wall.

"But I wish to give it myself—with my own hand."

"Sir Harry comes down to the office at five, and, if your name is down for an audience, will see you after six."

"And if it is not down?"

"He won't see you, that's all." There was an impatience

about the last words that implied he had lost his place in the newspaper, and wished to be rid of his interrogator.

"And if I leave my letter here, when shall I call for the answer?" asked Tony, diffidently.

"Any time from this to this day six weeks," said the other, with a wave of the hand to imply the audience was ended.

"What if I were to try his private residence?" said Tony.

"Eighty-one, Park Lane," said the other aloud, while he mumbled over to himself the last line he had read, to recall his thoughts to the passage.

"You advise me then to go there?"

"Always cutting down, always slicing off something!" muttered the other with his eyes on the paper. "'For the port-collector of Hallihololulo, three hundred and twenty pounds. Mr. Scrudge moved as amendment that the vote be reduced by the sum of seventy-four pounds eighteen and sevenpence, being the amount of the collector's salary for the period of his absence from his post during the prevalence of the yellow fever on the coast. The honourable member knew a gentleman, whose name he was unwilling to mention publicly, but would have much pleasure in communicating confidentially to any honourable gentleman on either side of the House, who had passed several days at Haccamana, and never was attacked by any form of yellow fever.' That was a home-thrust, eh?" cried the reader, addressing Tony. "Not such an easy thing to answer old Scrudge there?"

"I'm a poor opinion on such matters," said Tony with humility; "but pray tell me, if I were to call at Park Lane——"

The remainder of his question was interrupted by the sudden start to his legs of the austere porter, as an effeminate-looking young man with his hat set on one side, and a glass to his eye, swung wide the door, and walked up to the letter-rack.

"Only these, Willis?" said he, taking some half-dozen letters of various sizes.

"And this, sir," said the porter, handing him Tony's letter; "but the young man think's he'd like to have it back;" while he added, in a low but very significant tone—"he's going to Park Lane with it himself."

The young gentleman turned round at this, and took a very leisurely survey of the man who contemplated a step of such rare audacity.

"He's from Ireland, Mr. Damer," whispered the porter, with a half-kindly impulse to make an apology for such ignorance.

Mr. Damer smiled faintly, and gave a little nod, as though to say that the explanation was sufficient; and again turned towards Tony.

"I take it that you know Sir Harry Elphinstone?" asked he.

"I never saw him; but he knew my father very well, and he'll remember my name."

"Knew your father? And in what capacity, may I ask?"

"In what capacity?" repeated Tony, almost fiercely.

"Yes; I mean, as what—on what relations did they stand to each other?"

"As schoolfellows at Westminster, where he fagged to my father; in the Grenadier Guards afterwards, where they served together; and, last of all, as correspondents, which they were for many years."

"Ah, yes," sighed the other, as though he had read the whole story, and a very painful story too, of change of fortune and ruined condition. "But still," continued he, "I'd scarcely advise your going to Park Lane. He don't like it. None of them like it!"

"Don't they?" said Tony, not even vaguely guessing at whose prejudices he was hinting, but feeling bound to say something.

"No, they don't," rejoined Mr. Damer, in a half confidential way. "There is such a deal of it—fellows who were in the same 'eleven' at Oxford, or widows of tutors, or parties who wrote books—I think they are the worst, but all are bores, immense bores! You want to get something, don't you?"

Tony smiled, as much at the oddity of the question, as in acquiescence.

"I ask," said the other, "because you'll have to come to me: I'm private secretary, and I give away nearly all the office patronage. Come up-stairs;" and with this he led the way up a very dirty staircase to a still dirtier corridor, off which a variety of offices opened, the open doors of which displayed the officials in all forms and attitudes of idleness—some asleep, some reading newspapers, some at luncheon—and two were sparring with boxing-gloves.

"Sir Harry writes the whole night through," said Mr. Damer, "that's the reason these fellows have their own time of it now;" and with this bit of apology he ushered Tony into a small but comfortably-furnished room, with a great coal-fire in the grate, though the day was a sultry one in autumn.

Mr. Skeffington Damer's first care was to present himself

before a looking-glass, and arrange his hair, his whiskers, and his cravat; having done which, he told Tony to be seated, and threw himself into a most comfortably padded arm-chair, with a writing-desk appended to one side of it.

"I may as well open your letter. It's not marked private, eh?"

"Not marked private," said Tony, "but its contents are strictly confidential."

"But it will be in the waste-paper basket to-morrow morning for all that," said Damer, with a pitying compassion for the other's innocence. "What is it you are looking for—what sort of thing?"

"I scarcely know, because I'm fit for so little; they tell me the colonies, Australia or New Zealand, are the places for fellows like me."

"Don't believe a word of it," cried Damer, energetically. "A man with any 'go' in him can do fifty thousand times better at home. You go some thousand miles away—for what? to crush quartz, or hammer limestone, or pump water, or carry mud in baskets, at a dollar, two dollars, five dollars, if you like, a day, in a country where Dillon, one of our fellows that's under-secretary there, writes me word he paid thirty shillings for a pot of Yarmouth bloaters. It's a rank humbug all that about the colonies—take my word for it!"

"But what is there to be done at home, at least by one like *me?*"

"Scores of things. Go on to the Exchange—go in for a rise, go in for a fall. Take Peruvian Twelves—they're splendid—or Montezuman mining script. I did a little in Guatemalas last week, and I expect a capital return by next settling-day. If you think all this too gambling, get named director of a company. There's the patent phosphorus blacking, will give fifty pounds for a respectable chairman; or write a novel—that's the easiest thing in life, and pays wonderfully—Herd and Dashen give a thousand down, and double the money for each edition; and it's a fellow's own fault if it ain't a success. Then there's patent medicine and scene-painting—any one can paint a scene, all done with a great brush—this fashion; and you get up to fifteen, ay, twenty pounds a-week. By the way, are you active?"

"Tolerably so. Why do you ask?" said Tony, smiling at the impetuous incoherence of the other's talk.

"Just hold up this newspaper—so—not so high—there. Don't move; a very little to the right." So saying, Mr. Damer

took three sofa-cushions, and placed them in a line on the floor; and then taking off his coat and waistcoat, retired to a distant corner of the room. "Be steady, now; don't move," cried he; and then, with a brisk run, he dashed forward, and leaped head-foremost through the extended newspaper, but with so vigorous a spring as to alight on the floor a considerable distance in advance of the cushions, so that he arose with a bump on his forehead, and his nose bleeding.

"Admirably done! splendidly done!" cried Tony, anxious to cover the disaster by a well-timed applause.

"I never got so much as a scratch before," said Damer, as he proceeded to sponge his face. "I've done the clock and the coach-window at the Adelphi, and they all thought it was Salter. I could have five pounds a night and a free benefit. Is it growing black around the eye? I hope it's not growing black around the eye?"

"Let me bathe it for you. By the way, have you any one here could manage to get you a little newly-baked dough? That's the boxer's remedy for a bruise. If I knew where to go I'd fetch it myself."

Damer looked up from his bathing proceedings, and stared at the good-natured readiness of one so willing to oblige as not to think of the ridicule that might attach to his kindness. "My servant will go for it," said he; "just pull that bell, will you, and I'll send him. Is not it strange how I could have done this?" continued he, still bent on explaining away his failure; "what a nose I shall have to-morrow! Eh! what's that? It's Sir Harry's bell ringing away furiously! Was there ever the like of this! The only day he should have come for the last eight months!" The bell now continued to ring violently, and Damer had nothing for it but to huddle on his coat and rush away to answer the summons.

Though not more than ten minutes absent, Tony thought the time very long; in reality he felt anxious about the poor fellow, and eager to know that his disaster had not led to disgrace.

"Never so much as noticed it," said Damer—"was so full of other matters. I suspect," added he, in a lower tone—"I suspect we are going out."

"Out where?" asked Tony with simplicity.

"Out of office, out of power," replied the other half testily; then added in a more conciliatory voice, "I'll tell you why I think so. He began filling up all the things that are vacant. I have just named two colonial secretaries, a chief justice, an auditor-general, and an inspector of convicts. I thought of

that for *you*, and handed him your letter; but before he broke the seal he had filled up the place."

"So then he has read the letter?"

"Yes, he read it twice; and when I told him you were here in waiting, he said, 'Tell him not to go; I'll see him.'"

The thought of presenting himself bodily before the great man made Tony feel nervous and uncomfortable: and after a few moments of fidgety uneasiness, he said—"What sort of person is he? what is he like?"

"Well," said Damer, who now stood over a basin, sponging his eye with cold water, "he's shy—very shy—but you'd never guess it; for he has a bold abrupt sort of way with him; and he constantly answers his own questions, and if the replies displease him, he grows irritable. You've seen men like that?"

"I cannot say that I have."

"Then it's downright impossible to say when he's in good humour with one, for he'll stop short in a laugh and give you such a pull up!"

"That is dreadful!" exclaimed Tony.

"*I* can manage him! They say in the office I'm the only fellow that ever could manage him. There goes his bell—that's for you; wait here, however, till I come back."

Damer hurried away, but was back in a moment, and beckoned to Tony to follow him, which he did in a state of flurry and anxiety that a real peril would never have caused him.

Tony found himself standing in the Minister's presence, where he remained for full a couple of minutes before the great man lifted his head and ceased writing. "Sit down," was the first salutation; and, as he took a chair, he had time to remark the stern but handsome features of a large man, somewhat past the prime of life, and showing in the lines of his face traces of dissipation as well as of labour.

"Are you the son of Watty Butler?" asked he, as he wheeled his chair from the table and confronted Tony.

"My father's name was Walter, sir," replied Tony, not altogether without resenting this tone of alluding to him.

"Walter! nothing of the kind; nobody ever called him anything but Watty, or Wat Tartar, in the regiment. Poor Watty! you are very like him—not so large—not so tall."

"The same height to a hair, sir."

"Don't tell me; Watty was an inch and half over you, and much broader in the chest. I think I ought to know; he has

thrown me scores of times wrestling, and I suspect it would puzzle *you* to do it."

Tony's face flushed; he made no answer, but in his heart of hearts he'd like to have had a trial.

Perhaps the great man expected some confirmation of his opinion, or perhaps he had his own doubts about its soundness; but, whatever the reason, his voice was more peevish as he said, "I have read your mother's note, but for the life of me I cannot see what it points to. What has become of your father's fortune? he had something surely."

"Yes, sir, he had a younger son's portion, but he risked it in a speculation—some mines in Canada—and lost it."

"Ay, and dipped it too by extravagance! There's no need to tell me how he lived; there wasn't so wasteful a fellow in the regiment; he'd have exactly what he pleased, and spend how he liked. And what has it come to? ay, that's what I ask—what has it come to? His wife comes here with this petition—for it is a petition—asking—I'll be shot if I know what she asks."

"Then I'll tell you," burst in Tony; "she asks the old brother-officer of her husband—the man who in his letters called himself his brother—to befriend his son, and there's nothing like a petition in the whole of it."

"What! what! what! This is something I'm not accustomed to! You want to make friends, young man, and you must not begin by outraging the very few who might chance to be well-disposed towards you."

Tony stood abashed and overwhelmed, his cheeks on fire with shame, but he never uttered a word.

"I have very little patronage," said Sir Harry, drawing himself up and speaking in a cold, measured tone; "the colonies appoint their own officials, with a very few exceptions. I could make you a bishop or an attorney-general, but I couldn't make you a tide-waiter! What can you do? Do you write a good hand?"

"No, sir; it is legible—that's all."

"And of course you know nothing of French or German?"

"A little French; not a word of German, sir."

"I'd be surprised if you did. It is always when a fellow has utterly neglected his education that he comes to a Government for a place. The belief apparently is, that the State supports a large institution of incapables, eh?"

"Perhaps there is that impression abroad," said Tony, defiantly.

"Well, sir, the impression, as you phrase it, is unfounded, I can affirm. I have already declared it in the House, that there is not a government in Europe more ably, more honestly, or more zealously served than our own. We may not have the spirit of discipline of the French, or the bureaucracy of the Prussian; but we have a class of officials proud of the departments they administer; and, let me tell you—it's no small matter—very keen after retiring pensions."

Either Sir Harry thought he had said a smart thing, or that the theme suggested something that tickled his fancy, for he smiled pleasantly now on Tony, and looked far better tempered than before. Indeed, Tony laughed at the abrupt peroration, and that laugh did him no disservice.

"Well, now, Butler, what are we to do with you?" resumed the Minister, good-humouredly. "It's not easy to find the right thing, but I'll talk it over with Damer. Give him your address, and drop in upon him occasionally—not too often, but now and then, so that he shouldn't forget you. Meanwhile, brush up your French and Italian. I'm glad you know Italian."

"But I do not, sir; not a syllable of the language."

"Oh, it was German, then? don't interrupt me. Indeed let me take the occasion to impress upon you that you have this great fault of manners—a fault, I have remarked prevalent among Irishmen, and which renders them excessively troublesome in the House, and brings them frequently under the reproof of the Speaker. If you read the newspapers you will have seen this yourself."

Second to a censure of himself, the severest thing for poor Tony to endure was any sneer at his countrymen; but he made a great effort to remain patient, and did not utter a word.

"Mind," resumed the Minister, "don't misunderstand me. I do not say that your countrymen are deficient in quickness and a certain ready-witted way of meeting emergencies. Yes, they have that as well as some other qualities of the same order, but these things won't make statesmen. This was an old battle-ground between your father and myself thirty years ago. Strange to think I should have to fight over the same question with his son now."

Tony did not exactly perceive what was his share in the conflict, but he still kept silence.

"Your father was a clever fellow, too, and he had a brother—a much cleverer, by the way: there's the man to serve you—Sir Omerod Butler. He's alive, I know, for I saw his pension certificate not a week ago. Have you written to him?"

"No, sir. My father and my uncle were not on speaking terms for years, and it is not likely I would appeal to Sir Omerod for assistance."

"The quarrel, or coolness, or whatever it was, might have been the fault of your father."

"No, sir, it was not."

"Well, with that I have no concern. All that I know is, your uncle is a man of a certain influence—at least with his own party—which is not ours. He is, besides rich; an old bachelor, too, if I'm not mistaken; and so it might be worth the while of a young fellow who has his way to make in life, to compromise a little of his family pride."

"I don't think so: I won't do it," broke in Tony, hotly. "If you have no other counsel to give me than one you never would have given to my father, all I have to say is, I wish I had spared myself the trouble, and my poor mother the cost of this journey."

If the great man's wrath was moved by the insolent boldness of the first part of this speech, the vibrating voice and the emotion that accompained the last words touched him, and, going over to where the young man stood, he laid his hand kindly on his shoulder, and said, "You'll have to keep this warm temper of yours in more subjection, Butler, if you want to get on in life. The advice I gave you was very worldly, perhaps; but when you live to be my age, such will be the temper in which you'll come to consider most things. And, after all," said he, with a smile, "you're only the more like you're father for it! Go, away now; look up your decimals, your school classics, and such like, to be ready for the Civil Service people, and come back here in a week or so—let Damer know where to find you," were the last words, as Tony retired and left the room.

"Well, what success?" cried Damer, as Tony entered his room.

"I can scarcely tell you, but this is what took place;" and he recounted, as well as memory would serve him, all that had happened.

"Then it's all right—you are quite safe," said Damer.

"I don't see that, particularly as there remains this examination."

"Humbug—nothing but humbug! They only pluck the 'swells,' the fellows who have taken a double-first at Oxford. No, no; you're as safe as a church; you'll get—let me see what it will be—you'll get the Postmastership of the Bahamas;

or be Deputy Coal-meter at St. Helena; or who knows if he'll not give you that thing he exchanged for t'other day with F. O. It's a Consul's place, at Trincolopolis. It was Cole of the Blues had it, and he died; and there are four widows of his now claiming the pension. Yes, that's where you'll go, rely on't. There's the bell again. Write your address large, very large, on that sheet of paper, and I'll send you word when there's anything up."

CHAPTER VI.

DOLLY STEWART.

Tony's first care, when he got back to his hotel, was to write to his mother. He knew how great her impatience would be to hear of him, and it was a sort of comfort to himself, in his loneliness, to sit down and pour out his hopes and his anxieties before one who loved him. He told her of his meeting with the Minister, and, by way of encouragement, mentioned what Damer had pronounced upon that event. Nor did he forget to say how grateful he felt to Damer, who, "after all, with his fine-gentleman airs and graces, might readily have turned a cold shoulder to a rough-looking fellow like me."

Poor Tony! in his friendlessness he was very grateful for very little. Nor is there anything which is more characteristic of destitution than this sentiment. It is as with the school-boy, who deems himself rich with a half-crown!

Tony would have liked much to make some inquiry about the family at the Abbey; whether any one had come to ask after or look for him; whether Mrs. Trafford had sent down any books for his mother's reading, or any fresh flowers—the only present which the widow could be persuaded to accept; but he was afraid to touch on a theme that had so many painful memories to himself. Ah, what happy days he had passed there! What a bright dream it all appeared now to look back on! The long rides along the shore, with Alice for his companion, more free to talk with him, less reserved than Isabella; and who could, on the pretext of her own experiences of life—she was a widow of two-and-twenty—caution him against so many pitfalls, and guard him against so many deceits of the world. It was in this same quality of widow, too, that she could go out to sail with him alone, making long excursions along the coast, diving into bays, and landing on strange islands, giving them curious names as they went, and fancying that they were new voyagers on unknown seas.

Were such days ever to come back again? No, he knew they could not. They never do come back, even to the luckiest

of us ; and how far less would be our enjoyment of them if we but knew that each fleeting moment could never be re-acted ! "I wonder, is Alice lonely? Does she miss me ? Isabella will not care so much. She has books and her drawing, and she is so self-dependent ; but Alice, whose cry was, 'Where's Tony ? ' till it became a jest against her in the house. Oh, if she but knew how I envy the dog that lies at her feet, and that can look up into her soft blue eyes, and wonder what she is thinking of ! Well, Alice, it has come at last. Here is the day you so long predicted. I have set out to seek my fortune, but where is the high heart and the bold spirit you promised me ? I have no doubt," cried he, as he paced his room impatiently, "there are plenty who would say, it is the life of luxurious indolence and splendour that I am sorrowing after—that it is to be a fancied great man—to have horses to ride, and servants to wait on me, and my every wish gratified—it is all this I am regretting. But *I* know better ! I'd be as poor as ever I was, and consent never to be better, if she'd just let me see her, and be with her, and love her, to my own heart, without ever telling her. And now the day has come that makes all these bygones ! "

It was with a choking feeling in his throat—almost hysterical —that he went down-stairs and into the street to try and walk off his gloomy humour. The great city was now before him— a very wide and a very noisy world—with abundance to interest and attract him, had his mind been less intent on his own future fortunes ; but he felt that every hour he was away from his poor mother was a pang, and every shilling he should spend would be a privation to her. Heaven only could tell by what thrift and care and time she had laid by the few pounds he had carried away to pay his journey ! As his eye fell upon the tempting objects of the shop-windows, every moment displaying something he would liked to have brought back to her— that nice warm shawl—that pretty clock for her mantelpiece— that little vase for her flowers ; how he despised himself for his poverty, and how meanly the thought of a condition that made him a burden where he ought to have been a benefit. Nor was the thought the less bitter that it reminded him of the wide space that separated him from her he had dared to love ! "It comes to this," cried he bitterly to himself, "that I have no right to be here ; no right to do anything, or think of anything that I have done. Of the thousands that pass me, there is not, perhaps, one the world has not more need of than of me ! Is there even one of all this mighty million that would have a kind

word for me, if they knew the heavy heart that was weighing me down?" At this minute he suddenly thought of Dolly Stewart, the doctor's daughter, whose address he had carefully taken down from his mother, at Mr. Alexander M'Gruder's, 4, Inverness Terrace, Richmond.

It would be a real pleasure to see Dolly's good-humoured face, and hear her merry voice, instead of those heavy looks and busy faces that addled and confused him; and so, as much to fill up his time as to spare his purse, he set out to walk to Richmond.

With whatever gloom and depression he began his journey, his spirits rose as he gained the outskirts of the town, and rose higher and higher as he felt the cheering breezes and the perfumed air that swept over the rich meadows at either side of him. It was, besides, such a luxuriant aspect of country as he had never before seen nor imagined—fields cultivated like gardens, trim hedgerows, ornamental trees, picturesque villas on every hand. How beautiful it all seemed, and how happy! Was not Dolly a lucky girl to have her lot thrown in such a paradise? How enjoyable she must find it all!—she whose good spirits knew always how "to take the most out of" whatever was pleasant. How he pictured her delight in a scene of such loveliness!

"That's Inverness Terrace, yonder," said a policeman of whom he enquired the way—"that range of small houses you see there," and he pointed to a trim-looking row of cottage-houses on a sort of artificial embankment which elevated them above the surrounding buildings, and gave a view of the Thames as it wound through the rich meadows beneath. They were neat with that English neatness which at once pleases and shocks a foreign eye—the trim propriety that loves comfort, but has no heart for beauty. Thus each was like his neighbour: the very jalousies were painted the same colour; and every ranunculus in one garden had his brother in the next. No. 4 was soon found, and Tony rang the bell and enquired for Miss Stewart.

"She's in the school-room with the young ladies," said the woman servant; "but if you'll step in and tell me your name, I'll send her to you."

"Just say that I have come from her own neighbourhood; or, better, say Mr. Tony Butler would be glad to see her." He had scarcely been a moment in the neat but formal-looking front parlour, when a very tall, thin, somewhat severe-looking lady—not old, nor yet young—entered, and, without any salu-

tation, said, "You asked for Miss Stewart, sir—are you a relative of hers?"

"No, madam. My mother and Miss Stewart's father are neighbours and very old friends; and being by accident in London, I desired to see her, and bring back news of her to the doctor."

"At her father's request, of course?"

"No, madam; I cannot say so, for I left home suddenly, and had no time to tell him of my journey."

"Nor any letter from him?"

"None, madam."

The thin lady pursed up her parched lips, and bent her keen cold eyes on the youth, who really felt his cheek grow hot under the scrutiny. He knew that his confession did not serve to confirm his position; and he heartily wished himself out of the house again.

"I think, then, sir," said she, coldly, "it will serve every purpose if I inform *you*, that Miss Stewart is well; and if I tell *her*, that you were kind enough to call and ask after her."

"I'm sure you are right, madam," said he, hurriedly moving towards the door, for already he felt as if the ground was on fire beneath him—"quite right; and I'll tell the doctor that though I didn't see Miss Dora, she was in good health and very happy."

"I didn't say anything about her happiness, that I remember, sir; but as I see her now passing the door, I may leave that matter to come from her own lips. Miss Stewart," cried she, louder, "there is a gentleman here, who has come to enquire after you." A very pale but nicely-featured young girl, wearing a cap—her hair had been lately cut short in a fever—entered the room, and, with a sudden flush that made her positively handsome, held out her hand to young Butler, saying, "Oh, Tony, I never expected to see you here! how are all at home?"

Too much shocked at the change in her appearance to speak, Tony could only mumble out a few broken words about her father.

"Yes," cried she eagerly, "his last letter says that he rides old Dobbin about just as well as ever; 'perhaps it is,' says he, 'that having both of us grown old together, we bear our years with more tolerance to each other;' but won't you sit down, Tony? you're not going away till I have talked a little with you."

"Is the music lesson finished, Miss Stewart?" asked the thin lady, sternly.

"Yes, ma'am; we have done everything but sacred history."

"Everything but the one important task, you might have said, Miss Stewart; but, perhaps, you are not now exactly in the temperament to resume teaching for to-day; and, as this young gentleman's mission is apparently to report, not only on your health, but your happiness, I shall leave you a quarter of an hour to give him his instructions."

"I hate that woman," muttered Tony, as the door closed after her.

"No, Tony, she's not unkind; but she doesn't exactly see the world the way you and I used long ago. What a great big man you have grown!"

"And what a fine tall girl, you! And I used to call you a stump!"

"Ay, there were few compliments wasted between us in those days; but weren't they happy?"

"Do you remember them all, Dolly?"

"Every one of them—the climbing the big cherry-tree the day the branch broke, and we both fell into the mellon-bed; the hunting for eels under the stones in the river—wasn't that rare sport? and going out to sea in that leaky little boat, that I'd not have courage to cross the Thames in now!—oh, Tony, tell me, you never were so jolly since?"

"I don't think I was; and what's worse, Dolly, I doubt if I ever shall be."

The tone of deep despondency of these words went to her heart, and her lip trembled as she said—

"Have you had any bad news of late? is there anything going wrong with you?"

"No, Dolly, nothing new, nothing strange, nothing beyond the fact that I have been staring at, though I did not see it three years back, that I am a great hulking idle dog, of no earthly use to himself or to anybody else. However, I *have* opened my eyes to it at last, and here I am, come to seek my fortune, as we used to say long ago, which, after all, seems a far nicer thing in a fairy book than when reduced to a fact."

Dolly gave a little short cough, to cover a faint sigh which escaped her, for she, too, knew something about seeking her fortune, and that the search was not always a success.

"And what are you thinking of doing, Tony?" asked she, eagerly.

"Like all lazy good-for-nothings, I begin by begging; that is

to say, I have been to a great man this morning who knew my father, to ask him to give me something—to make me something."

"A soldier, I suppose?"

"No; mother won't listen to that. She's so indignant about the way they treated my poor father about that good-service pension—one of a race that has been pouring out their blood like water for three centuries back—that she says she'd not let me accept a commission if it were offered to me, without it came coupled with a full apology for the wrong done my father; and as I am too old for the navy, and too ignorant for most other things, it will push all the great man's ingenuity very close to find out the corner to suit me."

"They talk a deal about Australia, Tony; and, indeed, I sometimes I think I'd like to go there myself. I read in the *Times* t'other day that a dairy-maid got as much as forty-six pounds a-year and her board; only fancy forty-six pounds a-year! Do you know," added she, in a cautious whisper, "I have only eighteen pounds here, and was in rare luck too, they say, to get it."

"What if we were to set out together, Dolly?" said he, laughing; but a deep scarlet flush covered her face, and though she tried to laugh too, she had to turn her head away, for the tears were in her eyes.

"But how could *you* turn dairymaid, Dolly?" cried he, half reproachfully.

"Just as well, or rather better, than *you* turn shepherd or gold-digger. As to mere labour, it would be nothing; as to any loss of condition, I'd not feel it, and therefore not suffer it."

"Oh, I have no snobbery myself about working with my hands," added he, hastily; "Heaven help me if I had, for my head wouldn't keep me; but a girl's bringing up is so different from a boy's; she oughtn't to do anything menial out of her own home."

"We ought all of us just to do our best, Tony, and what leaves us less of a burden to others—that's my reading of it; and when we do that we'll have a quiet conscience, and that's something that many a rich man couldn't buy with all his money."

"I think it's the time for the children's dinner, Miss Stewart," said the grim lady, entering. "I am sorry it should cut short an interview so interesting."

A half angry reply rose to Tony's lips, when a look from

Dora stopped him, and he stammered out, "May I call and see you again before I go back?"

"When *do* you go back, young gentleman?" asked the thin lady.

"That's more than I can tell. This week if I can; next week if I must."

"If you'll write me a line then, and say what day it would be your convenience to come down here, I will reply, and state whether it will be Miss Stewart's and mine to receive you."

"Come at all events," said Dora, in a low voice, as they shook hands and parted.

"Poor Dolly!" muttered he, as he went his way towards town. "What between the pale cheeks and the cropped hair, and the odious cap, I'd never have known her!" He suddenly heard the sound of footsteps behind him, and turning he saw her running towards him at full speed.

"You had forgotten your cane Tony," said she, half breathless, "and I knew it was an old favourite of yours, and you'd be sorry to think it was lost. Tell me one thing," cried she, and her cheek flushed even a deeper hue than the exercise had given it, "could you—would you be a clerk—in a merchant's office, I mean?"

"Why do you ask me, Dolly?" said he, for her eager and anxious face directed all his solicitude from himself to her.

"If you only would, and could, Tony," continued she, "write. No; make papa write me a line to say so. There, I have no time for more; I have already done enough to secure me a rare lesson when I get back. Don't come here again."

She was gone before he could answer her; and with a heavier heart, and a very puzzled head, he resumed his road to London; "don't come here again" ringing in his head as he went.

CHAPTER VII.

LYLE ABBEY AND ITS GUESTS.

The company at Lyle Abbey saw very little of Maitland for some days after his arrival: he never appeared of a morning, he only one came down to dinner; his pretext was indifferent health, and Mark showed a disposition to quarrel with any one who disputed it. Not, indeed, that the squirearchy then present were at all disposed to regret Maitland's absence. They would infinitely rather have discussed his peculiarities in secret committee than meet himself in open debate. It was not very easy to say why they did not like him, but such was the fact. It was not that he overbore them by any species of assumption; he neither took on him airs of superior station nor of superior knowledge; he was neither insolent nor haughty; nor was he even, what sometimes is not less resented, careless and indifferent. His manner was a sort of middle term between popularity-seeking and inattention. The most marked trait in it was one common enough in persons who have lived much on the Continent—a great preference for the society of ladies, making him almost ignore or avoid the presence of the men around him. Not that Maitland was what is called *petit maître;* there was not any of that flippant prettiness which is supposed to have its fascination for the fair sex; he was quiet without any touch of over-seriousness, very respectful, and, at the same time, with an insinuated friendliness as though the person he talked to was one selected for especial cordiality; and there was a sort of tender languor, too, about him, that implied some secret care in his heart, of which each who listened to his conversation was sure to fancy that she was, one day, to become the chosen depositary.

"Do you know, Bella," said Mrs. Trafford, as they sat together at the fire in her dressing-room, "I shall end by half liking him."

"I haven't got that far, Alice, though I own that I am less in dread of him than I was. His superiority is not so crushing as I feared it might be; and certainly, if he be the Admirable

Crichton Mark pretends he is, he takes every possible pains to avoid all display of it."

"There may be some impertinence in that," said the other. "Did you remark how he was a week here before he as much as owned he knew anything of music, and listened to our weary little ballads every evening without a word? and last night, out of pure capriee, as it seemed, he sits down, and sings song after song of Verdi's difficult music, with a tenor that reminds one of Mario."

"And which has quite convinced old Mrs. Maxwell that he is a professional, or, as she called it, 'a singing man.'"

"She would call him a sketching man, if she saw the carieature he made of herself in the pony carriage, which he tore up the moment he showed it to me."

"One thing is clear, Alice—he means that we should like him; but he is too clever to set about it in any vulgar spirit of captivation."

"That is, he seeks regard for personal qualities rather more than admiration for his high gifts of intellect. Well, up to this, it is his cleverness that I like."

"What puzzles me is why he ever came here. He is asked about everywhere, has all manner of great houses open to him, and stores of fine people, of whose intimacy you can see he is proud, and yet he comes down to a dull country place in a dull county; and, stranger than all, he seems to like it."

"John Hunter says it is debt," said Mrs. Trafford.

"Mark Fortescue hints that a rich and handsome widow has something to say to it."

"Paul M'Clintock declares that he saw your picture by Ary Scheffer in the Exhibition, and fell madly in love with it, Bella."

"And old Colonel Orde says that he is intriguing to get in for the borough of Coleraine; that he saw him in the garden t'other morning with a list of the electors in his hand."

"My conjecture is, that he is intolerably bored everywhere, and came down here to try the effect of a new mode of the infliction that he had never experienced before. What else would explain a project I heard him arrange for this morning—a walk with Beck Graham!"

"Yes, I was in the window when he asked her where she usually went in those wanderings over the fern hills, with that great umbrella; and she told him to visit an old lady—a Mrs. Butler—who had been a dear friend of her mother's; and then he said, 'I wish you'd take me with you. I have a positive

weakness for old ladies;' and so the bargain was struck, that they were to go to the cottage to-day together."

"Beck, of course, fancying that it means a distinct avowal of attention to herself."

"And her sister, Sally, very fully persuaded that Maitland is a suitor for her hand, and cunningly securing Beck's good offices before he risks a declaration."

"Sally already believes that Mark is what she calls 'landed;' and she gave me some pretty broad hints about the insufferable pretensions of younger sons, to which class she consigns him."

"And Beck told me yesterday, in confidence, that Tony had been sent away from home by his mother, as the last resource against the consequence of his fatal passion for her."

"Poor Tony," sighed the young widow, "he never thought of her."

"Did he tell you as much, Alice?" said her sister, slyly.

"No, dear; it is the one subject—I mean love in any shape—that we never discussed. The poor boy confessed to me all his griefs about his purposeless idle life, his mother's straitened fortune, and his uncle's heartless indifference; everything, in short, that lay heavily on his heart."

"Everything but the heaviest, Alice," said the other, smiling.

"Well, if he had opened that sorrow, I'd have heard him without anger; I'd have honestly told him it was a very vain and fruitless pursuit. But still my own heart would have declared to me, that a young fellow is all the better for some romance of this kind—that it elevates motives and dignifies actions, and, not least of all advantages, makes him very uncompanionable for creatures of mere dissipation and excess."

"But that, of course, you were merely objective the while—the source from which so many admirable results were to issue, and never so much as disturbed by the breath of his attachment. Isn't that so?"

"I'd have said, 'you're a very silly boy if you imagine that anything can come of all this.'"

"And if he were to ask for the reason, and say, 'Alice, are you not your own mistress—rich—free to do whatever you incline to do? Why should you call me a fool for loving you?'"

"Take my word for it, Bella, he'll never risk the answer he'd be sure to meet to such a speech," said the other, haughtily; and Isabella, who felt a sort of awe of her sister at certain

moments, desisted from the theme. "Look! yonder they go Maitland and Rebecca, not exactly arm-in-arm, but with bent-down heads, and that propinquity that implies close converse."

"I declare I feel quite jealous—I mean on your account, Bella," said Mrs. Trafford.

"Never mind *my* interests in the matter, Alice," said she, reddening; "it is a matter of the most complete indifference to me with whom he walks or talks. Mr. Norman Maitland is not to me one whit more of consequence than is Tony Butler to my sister."

"That's a confession, Bella—a confession wrung out of a hasty moment; for Tony certainly likes *me*, and *I* know it."

"Well, then, the cases are not similar, for Mr. Maitland does not care for me; or if he does, I don't know it, nor do I want to know it."

"Come, darling, put on your shawl, and let us have a breezy walk on the cliffs before the day darkens; neither of these gentlemen are worth the slightest estrangement between such sisters as we are. Whether Tony likes me or not, don't steal him from me, and I'll promise you to be just as loyal with regard to the other. How I'd like to know what they are talking of there!"

As it is not impossible the reader may in some slight degree participate in the fair widow's sentiment, we mean to take up the conversation just as it reached the time in which the remark was applied to it. Miss Becky Graham was giving her companion a sketchy description of all the persons then at the Abbey, not taking any especial care to be epigrammatic or picturesque, but to be literal and truthful.

"Mrs. Maxwell—an old horror—tolerated just because she owns Tilney Park, and can leave it to whom she likes; and the Lyles hope it will fall to Mark, or possibly to Bella. They stand to win on either."

"And which is the favourite?" asked Maitland, with a faint smile.

"You'd like to think Isabella," said Miss Becky, with a sharp piercing glance to read his thoughts at an unguarded moment, if he had such, "but she is not. Old Aunt Maxwell she's as much your aunt as theirs—detests girls, and has, I actually believe, thoughts of marrying again. By the way, you said you wanted money—why not 'go in' there? eight thousand a-year in land, real estate, and a fine old house with some great timber around it."

"I want to pay my old debts, not incur new ones, my dear Miss Graham."

"I'm not your dear Miss Graham—I'm Beck, or Becky, or I'm Miss Rebecca Graham, if you want to be respectful. But what do you say to the Maxwell handicap? I could do you a good turn there; she lets me say what I please to her."

"I'd rather you'd give me that privilege with yourself, charming Rebecca."

"Don't, I say; don't try that tiresome old dodge of mock flattery. I'm not charming, any more than you are honest or straightforward. Let us be on the square—do you understand that? Of course you do? Whom shall I trot out next for you?—for the whole lot shall be disposed of without any reserve. Will you have Sir Arthur, with his tiresome Indian stories, enhanced to himself by all the lacs of rupees that are associated with them? Will you have the gay widow, who married for pique, and inherited a great fortune by a blunder? Will you have Isabella, who is angling for a coronet, but would not refuse *you* if you are rich enough? Will you have that very light dragoon, who thinks 'ours' the standard for manners in Europe?—or the two elder brothers, grey-headed, pale-faced husky-voiced civil servants, working hard to make a fortune in advance of a liver complaint? Say the 'number,' and the animal shall be led out for inspection."

"After all, it is scarcely fair in me to ask it, for I don't come as a buyer."

"Well, if you have a taste for that sort of thing—are we out of sight of the windows?—if so, let me have a cigarette like that you have there. I haven't smoked for five months. Oh! isn't it a pleasure?"

"Tell me about Mrs. Butler—who is she?"

"She is Mrs. Butler: and her husband, when he was alive, was Colonel Butler, militarily known as Wat Tartar. He was a terrible pipeclay; and her son Tony is the factotum at the Abbey; or rather he was, till Mark told him to shave a poodle, or singe a pony, or paint a wheelbarrow—I forget; but I know it was something he had done once out of good-humour, and the hussar creature fancied he'd make him do it again through an indignity."

"And he—I mean Butler—stands upon being a gentleman?"

"I should think he does; is not his birth good?"

"Certainly; the Butlers are of an old stock."

"They talk of an uncle, Sir Ramrod—it isn't Ramrod,

but it's like it—a tiresome old fellow, who was envoy at Naples, and who married, I believe, a ballet-dancer, and who might leave Tony all his fortune, if he liked—which he doesn't."

"Having no family of his own?" asked Maitland, as he puffed his cigar.

"None; but that doesn't matter, for he has turned Jesuit, and will leave everything to the sacred something or other in Rome. I've heard all that from old Widow Butler, who has a perfect passion for talking of her amiable brother-in-law, as she calls him. She hates him—always did hate him—and taught Tony to hate him; and with all that it was only yesterday she said to me that perhaps she was not fully justified in sending back unopened two letters he had written to her—one after the loss of some Canadian bonds of hers, which got rumoured abroad in the newspapers; the other was on Tony's coming of age; and she said, 'Becky, I begin to suspect that I had no right to carry my own unforgiveness to the extent of an injury to my boy—tell me what you would do."

"And what was your answer?"

"I'd have made it up with the old swell. I'd say 'Is not this boy more to you than all those long-petticoated tonsured humbugs, who can always cheat some one or other out of an inheritance?' I'd say, "Look at him, and you'll fancy it's Walter telling you that he forgives you.'"

"If he be like most of his order, Miss Becky, he'd only smile at your appeal," said Maitland, coldly.

"Well, I'd not let it be laughing matter with him, I can tell you; stupid wills are broken every day of the week, and I don't think the Jesuits are in such favour in England that a jury would decide for them against an English youth of the kith and kin of the testator."

"You speak cleverly, Miss Graham, and you show that you know all the value that attaches to popular sympathy in the age we live in."

"And don't you agree with me?"

"Ah, there's a deal to be said on either side."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, don't say it. There—no—more to the left—there, where you see the blue smoke rising over the rocks—there stands the widow's cottage. I don't know how she endures the loneliness of it. Could *you* face such a life?"

"A double solitude—what the French call an *egoïsme à deux*—is not so insupportable. In fact, it all depends upon 'the partner with whom we share our isolation.'" He threw a tone of half tenderness into the words that made them very signifi-

cant, and Rebecca gave him one of her quick sudden glances with which she often read a secret motive. This time, however, she failed. There was nothing in that sallow but handsome face that revealed a clue to anything.

"I'll have to ask Mrs. Butler's leave before I present you," said she, suddenly.

"Of course, I'll await her permission."

"The chances are she'll say no; indeed, it is all but certain she will."

"Then I must resign myself to patience and a cigar till you come out again," said he, calmly.

"Shall I say that there's any reason for your visit? Do you know any Butlers, or have you any relationship, real or pretended, with the family, that would make a pretext for coming to see her?"

Had Miss Graham only glanced as keenly at Maitland's features now as she had a few moments back, she might have seen a faint—a very faint flush cross his cheek, and then give way to a deep paleness. "No," said he, coldly, "I cannot pretend the shadow of a claim to her acquaintance, and I can scarcely presume to ask you to present me as a friend of your own, except in the common acceptation given to the word."

"Oh, I'll do that readily enough. Bless your heart, if there was anything to be gained by it, I'd call you my cousin, and address you as Norman all the time of the visit."

"If you but knew how the familiarity would flatter me, particularly were I to return it!"

"And call *me* Becky—I hope! Well, you *are* a cool hand!"

"My friends are in the habit of amusing themselves with my diffidence and my timidity."

"They must be very ill off for a pastime, then. I used to think Mark Lyle bad enough, but his is a blushing bashfulness compared to yours."

"You only see me in my struggle to overcome a natural defect, Miss Graham—just as a coward assumes the bully to conceal his poltroonery; you regard in me the mock audacity that strives to shroud a most painful modesty."

She looked full at him for an instant, and then burst into a loud and joyful fit of laughter, in which he joined without the faintest show of displeasure. "Well, I believe you are good-tempered," said she, frankly.

"The best in the world; I am very seldom angry; I never bear malice."

"Have you any other good qualities?" asked she, with a slight mockery in her voice.

"Yes—many: I am trustful to the verge of credulity; I am generous to the limits of extravagance; I am unswerving in my friendships, and without the taint of a selfishness in all my nature."

"How nice that is! or how nice it must be!"

"I could grow eloquent over my gifts, if it were not that my bashfulness might embarrass me."

"Have you any faults?"

"I don't think so; at least I can't recall any."

"Nor failings?"

"Failings! perhaps," said he, dubiously; "but they are after all mere weaknesses—such as a liking for splendour—a love of luxury generally—a taste for profusion, a sort of regal profusion in daily life, which occasionally jars with my circumstances, making me—not irritable, I am never irritable—but low-spirited and depressed."

"Then, from what you have told me, I think I'd better say to Mrs. Butler that there's an angel waiting outside who is most anxious to make her acquaintance."

"Do so; and add, that he'll fold his wings, and sit on this stone till you come to fetch him."

"*Au revoir*, Gabriel, then," said she, passing in at the wicket, and taking her way through the little garden.

Maitland sat discussing in his own mind the problem how far Alcibiades was right or wrong in endeavouring to divert the world from any criticism of himself by a certain alteration in his dog's tail, rather opining that, in our day, at least, the wiser course would have been to avoid all comment whatsoever—the imputation of an eccentricity being only second to the accusation of a crime. With the Greeks of that day the false scent was probably a success; with the English of ours, the real wisdom is not to be hunted. "Oh, if it were all to be done again, how very differently I should do it!"

"Indeed, and in what respect?" said a voice behind his shoulder. He looked up and saw Beck Graham gazing on him with something of interest in her expression. "How so?" cried she again. Not in the slightest degree discomposed or flurried, he lay lazily back on the sward, and drawing his hand over his eyes to shade them from the sun, said, in a half-languid weary tone, "If it were to do again, I'd go in for happiness."

"What do you mean by happiness?"

"What we all mean by it: an organized selfishness, that

draws a close cordon round our home, and takes care to keep out, so far as possible, duns, bores, fevers, and fashionable acquaintances. By the way, is your visit ended or will she see me?"

"Not to-day. She hopes to-morrow to be able. She asks if you are of the Maitlands of Gillie—Gillie, not 'crankie,' but a sound like it—and if your mother's name was Janet."

"And I trust from the little you know of me, you assured her it could not be," said he, calmly.

"Well, I said that I knew no more of your family than all the rest of us up at the Abbey, who have been sifting all the Maitlands in the three kingdoms, in the hope of finding you."

"How flattering! and at the same time, how vain a labour! The name came to me with some fortune. I took it as I'd have taken a more ill-sounding one, for money! Who wouldn't be baptized in bank stock? I hope it's not on the plea of my mother being Janet, that she consents to receive me?"

"She hopes you are Lady Janet's son, and that you have the Maitland eyes, which it seems are dark, and a something in their manner which she assures me was especially captivating."

"And for which, I trust, you vouched?"

"Yes. I said you were a clever sort of person, that could do a number of things well, and that I for one didn't quarrel with your vanity or conceit, but thought them rather good fun."

"So they are! and we'll laugh at them together," said he, rising, and preparing to set out. "What a blessing to find one that really understands me! I wish to heaven that you were not engaged!"

"And who says I am?" cried she, almost fiercely.

"Did I dream it? Who knows? The fact is, my dear Miss Becky, we do talk with such a rare freedom to each other, it is pardonable to mix up one's reveries with his actual information. How do you call that ruin yonder?"

"Dunluce."

"And that great bluff beyond it?"

"Fairhead."

"I'll take a long walk to-morrow, and visit that part of the coast."

"You are forgetting you are to call on Mrs. Butler."

"So I was. At what hour are we to be here?"

"There is no question of 'we' in the matter; your modesty must make its advances alone."

"You are not angry with me, *carissima* Rebecca?"

"Don't think that a familiarity is less a liberty because it is dressed in a foreign tongue."

"But it would 'out;' the expression forced itself from my lips in spite of me, just as some of the sharp things you have been saying to me were perfectly irrepressible?"

"I suspect you like this sort of sparring?"

"Delight in it."

"So do I. There's only one condition I make: whenever you mean to take off the gloves, and intend to hit out hard, that you'll say so before. Is that agreed?"

"It's a bargain."

She held out her hand frankly, and he took it as cordially; and in a hearty squeeze the compact was ratified.

"Shall I tell you," said she, as they drew nigh the Abbey, "that you are a great puzzle to us all here? We none of us can guess how so great a person as yourself should condescend to come down to such an out-o'-the-world spot, and waste his fascinations on such dull company."

"Your explanation, I'll wager, was the true one: let me hear it."

"I called it eccentricity; the oddity of a man who had traded so long in oddity that he grew to be inexplicable, even to himself, and that an Irish country-house was one of the few things you had not 'done,' and that you were determined to 'do' it."

"There was that, and something more," said Maitland, thoughtfully.

"The 'something more' being, I take it, the whole secret."

"As you read me like a book, Miss Rebecca, all I ask is, that you'll shut the volume when you've done with it, and not talk over it with your literary friends."

"It is not my way," said she, half pettishly; and they reached the door as she spoke.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME EXPLANATIONS.

If there was anything strange or inexplicable in the appearance of one of Maitland's pretensions in an unfrequented and obscure part of the world—if there was matter in it to puzzle the wise heads of squires, and make country intelligences look confused, there is no earthly reason why any mystification should be practised with our reader. He, at least, is under our guidance, and to him we impart whatever is known to ourselves. For a variety of reasons, some of which this history later on will disclose—others, the less imminent, we are free now to avow—Mr. Norman Maitland had latterly addressed much of his mind to the political intrigues of a foreign country: that country was Naples. He had known it—we are not free to say how, at this place—from his childhood; he knew its people in every rank and class; he knew its dialect in all its idioms. He could talk the slang of the lazzaroni, and the wild *patois* of Calabria, just as fluently as that composite language which the King Ferdinand used, and which was a blending of the vulgarisms of the Chiaja with the Frenchified chit-chat of the Court.

There were events happening in Italy which, though not for the moment involving the question of Naples, suggested to the wiser heads in that country the sense of a coming peril. We cannot, at this place, explain how or why Maitland should have been a sharer in these deeds; it is enough to say that he was one of a little knot who had free access to the palace, and enjoyed constant intercourse with the king—free to tell him of all that went on in his brilliant capital of vice and levity—to narrate its duels, its defalcations, its intrigues, its family scandals and domestic disgraces—to talk of anything and everything but one;—not a word on politics was to escape them; never in the most remote way was a syllable to drop of either what was happening in the State, or what comments the French or English press might pass on it. No allusion was to escape on questions of government, nor the name of a Minister to be spoken, except he were the hero of some notorious scandal. All these pre-

cautions could not stifle fear. The menials had seen the handwriting on the wall before Belshazzar's eyes had fallen on it. The men who stood near the throne saw that it rocked already. There was but one theme within the palace—the fidelity of the army; and every rude passage between the soldiery and the people seemed to testify to that faithfulness. Amongst those who were supposed to enjoy the sovereign confidence—for none in reality possessed it—was the Count Caffarelli, a man of very high family and large fortune, and though not in the slightest degree tinctured with Liberalism in politics, one of the very few Neapolitan nobles who either understood the drift, or estimated the force, of the party of action. He foresaw the coming struggle, and boded ill of its result. With Mr. Maitland he lived in closest intimacy. The Italian, though older than the Englishman, had been his companion in years of dissipation. In every capital of Europe these two men had left traditions of extravagance and excess. They had an easy access to the highest circles in every city, and it was their pleasure to mix in all, even to the lowest. Between them there had grown what, between such men, represented a strong friendship—that is, either would readily have staked his life or his fortune; in other words, have fought a duel, or paid the play-debts of the other. Each knew the exact rules of honour which guided the conduct of the other, and knew, besides, that no other principles than these held any sway or influence over him.

Caffarelli saw that the Bourbon throne was in danger, and with it the fortunes of all who adhered to the dynasty. If all his prejudices and sympathies were with monarchy, these would not have prevented him from making terms with the revolution, if he thought the revolution could be trusted; but this was precisely what he did not, could not, believe. "*Ceux qui sont Bleus restent Bleus*," said the first Napoleon; and so Caffarelli assured himself that a *canaille* always would be a *canaille*. Philip Egalité was a case in point of what came of such concessions; therefore he decided it was better to stand by the monarchy, and that real policy consisted in providing that there should be a monarchy to stand by.

To play that mock game of popularity, the being cheered by the lazzaroni, was the extent of toleration to which the King could be persuaded. Indeed, he thought these *vivas* the hearty outburst of a fervent and affectionate loyalty, and many of his Ministers appeared to concur with him. Caffarelli, who was Master of the Horse, deemed otherwise, and confessed to Maitland that, though assassination was cheap enough in the quarter

of Santa Lucia, there was a most indiscriminating indifference as to who might be the victim, and that the old Marquess of Montanara, the Prefect of the Palace, would not cost a *carlino* more than the veriest follower of Mazzini.

Both Caffarelli and Maitland enjoyed secret sources of information. They were members of that strange league which has a link in every grade and class of Neapolitan society, and makes the very highest in station the confidant and the accomplice of the most degraded and the meanest. This sect, called La Camorra, was originally a mere system of organized extortion, driving, by force of menace, an impost on every trade and occupation, and exacting its dues by means of agents well known to be capable of the greatest crimes. Caffarelli, who had long employed its services to assist him in his intrigues or accomplish his vengeances, was a splendid contributor to its resources. He was rich and munificent; he loved profusion, but he adored it when it could be made the mainspring of some dark and mysterious machinery. Though the Camorra was not in the remotest degree political, Caffarelli learned, through its agency, that the revolutionary party were hourly gaining strength and courage. They saw the growing discontent that spread abroad about the ruling dynasty, and they knew how little favour would be shown the Bourbons by the Western Powers, whose counsels had been so flatly rejected, and whose warnings despised. They felt that their hour was approaching, and that Northern Italy would soon hasten to their aid if the work of overthrow were once fairly begun. Their only doubts were, lest the success, when achieved, should have won nothing for them. It may be as in Forty-eight, said they; we may drive the King out of Naples, as we drove the Austrians out of Milan, and, after all, only be conquering a larger kingdom for the House of Savoy. Hence they hesitated and held back; nor were their fears causeless. For what had revolution poured forth its blood like water in Paris? To raise up the despotism of the Second Empire!

Caffarelli was in possession of all this; he knew what they hoped, and wished, and feared. The Camorra itself numbered many professed revolutionists ("Reds," as they liked to be called) in its sect, but was itself untinctured by politics. The wily Count thought that it was a pity so good an organization should be wasted on mere extortion and robbery. There were higher crimes they might attain to, and grander interests they might subserve. Never, perhaps, was the world of Europe so much in the hands of a few powerful men. Withdraw from it, say, half-a-dozen—one could name them at once—and what a

change might come over the Continent! Caffarelli was no assassin; but there are men, and he was one of them, that can trifle with great crimes, just as children play with fire—who can jest with them, laugh at them, and sport with them, till, out of mere familiarity, they forget the horror they should inspire and the penalty they enforce. He had known Orsini intimately, and liked him; nor did he talk of his memory with less affection that he had died beneath the guillotine. He would not himself engage in a crime that would dishonour his name; but he knew there were a great number of people in the world who could no more be punctilious about honour than about the linen they wore—fellows who walked in rags and dined off garlic. Why should they stick at trifles? *They* had no noble escutcheons to be tarnished, no splendid names, no high lineage to be disgraced. In fact, there were crimes that became them, just as certain forms of labour suited them. They worked with their hands in each case. Amongst the Camorra he knew many such. The difficulty was to bring the power of the sect to bear upon the questions that engaged him. It would not have been difficult to make them revolutionists—the one word pillage would have sufficed for that; the puzzle was how to make them royalists. Mere pay would not do. These fellows had got a taste for irregular gain. To expect to win them over by pay, or retain them by discipline, was to hope to convert a poacher by inviting him to a battue. Caffarelli had revolved the matter very long and carefully; he had talked it over scores of times with Maitland. They agreed that the Camorra had great capabilities, if one only could use them. Through the members of that league in the army they had learned that the troops, the long-vaunted reliance of the monarchy, could not be trusted. Many regiments were ready to take arms with the Reds; many more would disband and return to their homes. As for the navy, they declared there was not one ship's company would stand by the Sovereign. The most well-affected would be neutral; none save the foreign legions would fight for the King. The question then was, to reinforce these, and at once—a matter far more difficult than it used to be. Switzerland would no longer permit this recruitment. Austria would give none but her criminals. America, it was said, abounded in ardent adventurous spirits, that would readily risk life in pursuit of fortune; but then the cause was not one which, by any ingenuity, could be made to seem that of liberty. Nothing then remained but Ireland. There there was bravery and poverty both. Thousands, who had no fears and very little food, ready for any

enterprise, but far readier for one which could be dignified as being the battle of the Truth and the cause of the Holy Father.

An Irish legion, some five or six thousand devout Catholics and valiant soldiers, was a project that the Minister of War at once embraced. His Excellency saw Maitland on it, and talked over the whole plan. Maitland was himself to direct all its operations. Caffarelli would correspond with him from Naples, and, in case of any complication or difficulty, shroud the Minister from attack. Ample funds would be provided. The men could be engaged as labourers upon some great public work, and forwarded in small drafts to a convenient port. Arms could be easily procured from Liége. Officers could be readily obtained, either Irish, or Poles, or Hungarians, who could speak English. In a word, all the details had been well discussed and considered, and Maitland, on arriving in London, had again talked over the project with wise and crafty heads, whose prudent counsels showed him how little fit he was personally to negotiate directly with the Irish peasant, and how imperative above all things it was to depute this part of his task to some clever native, capable of employing the subordinates he needed. "Hide yourself," said they, "in some out-of-the-way spot in Wales or Scotland; even the far north of Ireland will do; remain anywhere near enough to have frequent communication with your agent, but neither be seen nor known in the plot yourself. Your English talk and your English accent would destroy more confidence than your English gold would buy."

Such an agent was soon found—a man admirably adapted in many respects for the station. He had been an adventurer all his life; served with the French in Austria, and the Austrians in the Banat; held an independent command of Turks during the Crimean war; besides episodically having "done a little," as he called it, on the Indian frontier with the Yankees; and served on the staff of Rosas, at La Plata; all his great and varied experiences tending to one solitary conviction, that no real success was ever to be attained in anything except by means of Irishmen; nor could order, peace, and loyalty be ever established anywhere without their assistance. If he was one of the bravest men living, he was one of the most pushing and impertinent. He would have maintained a point of law against the Lord Chancellor, and contested tactics with a Marshal of France. He thought himself the ornament of any society he entered, and his vanity, in matters of intellect, was only sur-

passed by his personal conceit. And now one word as to his appearance. With the aid of cleverly-constructed boots he stood five feet four, but was squarely, stoutly built, broad in the chest, and very bow-legged; his head was large, and seemed larger from a mass of fiery red hair, of which he was immensely vain as the true Celtic colour; he wore great whiskers, a mustache, and chin-tuft; but the flaming hue of these seemed actually tamed and toned down beside his eyes, which resembled two flaring carbuncles. They were the most excitable, quarrelsome, restless pair of orbs that ever beamed in a human head. They twinkled and sparkled with an incessant mischief, and they darted such insolent glances right and left, as seemed to say, "Is there any one present who will presume to contradict me?"

His boundless self-conceit would have been droll if it had not been so offensive. His theory was this: all men detested him; all women adored him. Europe had done little better than intrigue for the last quarter of a century what country could secure his services. As for the insolent things he had said to kings, and emperors, and the soft speeches that empresses and queens had made to himself, they would fill a volume. Believe him, and he had been on terms of more than intimacy in every royal palace of the Continent. Show the slightest semblance of doubt in him, and the chances were that he'd have had you "out" in the morning.

Amongst his self-delusions, it was one to believe that his voice and accent were peculiarly insinuating. There was, it is true, a certain slippery insincerity about them, but the vulgarity was the chief characteristic; and his brogue was that of Leinster, which, even to Irish ears, is insufferable.

Such was, in brief, the gentleman who called himself Major M'Caskey, Knight-Commander of various Orders, and C.S. in the Pope's household—which, interpreted, means Cameriere Secreto—a something which corresponds to gentleman-in-waiting. Maitland and he had never met. They had corresponded freely, and the letters of the Major had by no means made a favourable impression upon Maitland, who had more than once forwarded extracts from them to the committees in London, pettishly asking, "if something better could not be found than the writer of this rubbish." And yet, for the work before him, "the writer of this rubbish" was a most competent hand. He knew his countrymen well—knew how to approach them by those mingled appeals to their love of adventure and love

of gain—their passion for fighting, for carelessness, for disorder; and, above all, that wide uncertainty as to what is to come, which is, to an Irishman's nature, the most irresistible of all seductions. The Major had established committees—in other words, recruiting depots—in several county towns; had named a considerable number of petty officers; and was only waiting Maitland's orders whether or not he should propose the expedition to adventurous but out-at-elbows young fellows of a superior station—the class from which officers might be taken. We have now said enough of him and the project that engaged him to admit of our presenting him to our readers in one of his brief epistles. It was dated—

"Castle Durrow, *August*—, 18—.

"Sir,—I have the honour to report for your information that I yesterday enrolled in this town and neighbourhood eighteen fine fellows for H.N.M. Two of them are returned convicts, and three more are bound over to come up for sentence at a future assizes, and one, whom I have named a corporal, is the notorious Hayes, who shot Captain Macon on the fair green at Ballinasloe. So you see there's little fear that they'll want to come back here when once they have attained to the style and dignity of Neapolitan citizens. Bounty is higher here by from sixteen to twenty shillings than in Meath; indeed, fellows who can handle a gun, or are anyways ready with a weapon, can always command a job from one of the secret clubs; and my experiences (wide as most men's) lead me entirely to the selection of those who have shown any aptitude for active service. I want your permission and instruction to engage some young gentlemen of family and station, for the which I must necessarily be provided with means of entertainment. *Tafel Gelt ist nicht Teufel's Gelt*, says the Austrian adage; and I believe a very moderate outlay, assisted by my own humble gifts of persuasion, will suffice. *Séduction de M'Casky*, was a proverb in the 8th Voltigeurs. You may ask a certain high personage in France who it was that told him not to despair on a particular evening at Strasbourg. A hundred pounds—better if a hundred and fifty—would be useful. The medals of His Holiness have done well, but I only distribute them in the lower ranks. Some titles would be very advisable if I am to deal with the higher class. Herewith you have a muster-roll of what has been done in two counties: and I say it without fear, not a man in the three kingdoms could have accomplished it

but Miles M'C. Marmont could plan, but not execute; Massena execute, but not organize; Soult could do none but the last. It is no vanity makes me declare that I combine all the qualities. You see me now 'organizing;' in a few days you shall judge me in the field; and, later on, if my convictions do not deceive me, in the higher sphere of directing the great operations of an army. I place these words in your hands that they may be on record. If M'Caskey falls, it is a great destiny cut off; but posterity will see that he died in the full conviction of his genius. I have drawn on you for thirty-eight, ten-and-six; and to-morrow will draw again for seventy-four, fifteen.

"Your note has just come. I am forced to say that its tone is not that to which, in the sphere I have moved, I have been accustomed. If I am to regard you as my superior officer, duty cries, 'Submit.' If you be simply a civilian, no matter how exalted, I ask explanation. The dinner at the Dawson Arms *was* necessary; the champagne was *not* excessive; none of the company were really drunk before ten o'clock; and the destruction of the furniture was a *plaisanterie* of a young gentleman from Louth who was going into holy orders, and might most probably not have another such spree in all his life again. Are you satisfied? If not, tell me what and where any other satisfaction may meet your wishes. You say, 'Let us meet.' I reply, 'Yes, in any way you desire.' You have not answered my demand—it was demand, not request—to be Count M'Casky. I have written to Count Caffarelli on the subject, and have thoughts of addressing the King. Don't talk to me of decorations. I have no room for them on the breast of my coat. I am forced to say these things to you, for I cannot persuade myself that you really know or understand the man you correspond with. After all, it took Radetzky a year, and Omar Pasha seventeen months, to arrive at that knowledge which my impatience, unjustly perhaps, complains that you have not attained to. Yet I feel we shall like each other; and were it not like precipitancy, I'd say, believe me, dear Maitland, very faithfully your friend,

"Miles M'Caskey."

The answer to this was very brief, and ran thus—

"Lyle Abbey, *August.*

"Sir,

"You will come to Coleraine, and await my orders there—

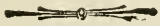
the first of which will be to take no liberties of any kind with your obedient servant,

"NORMAN MAITLAND.

"MAJOR M'CASKEY,

"The Dawson Arms, Castle Durrow."

"*P.S.*—Avoid all English acquaintances on your road. Give yourself out to be a foreigner, and speak as little as possible."



CHAPTER IX.

MAITLAND'S FRIEND.

"I DON'T think I'll walk down to the Burnside with you to-day," said Beck Graham to Maitland, on the morning after their excursion.

"And why not?"

"People have begun to talk of our going off together alone—long solitary walks. They say it means something—or nothing."

"So, I opine, does every step and incident of our lives."

"Well. You understand what I intended to say."

"Not very clearly, perhaps; but I shall wait a little further explanation. What is it that the respectable public imputes to us?"

"That you are a very dangerous companion for a young lady in a country walk."

"But am I? Don't you think you are in a position to refute such a calumny?"

"I spoke of you as I found you."

"And how might that be?"

"Very amusing at some moments; very absent at others; very desirous to be thought lenient and charitable in your judgments of people, while evidently thinking the worst of every one; and with a rare frankness about yourself that, to any one not very much interested to learn the truth, was really as valuable as the true article."

"But you never charged me with any ungenerous use of my advantage; to make professions, for instance, because I found you alone."

"A little—a very little of that—there was; just as children stamp on thin ice and run away when they hear it crack beneath them."

"Did I go so far as that?"

"Yes; and Sally says, if she was in my place, she'd send papa to you this morning."

"And I should be charmed to see him. There are no people

whom I prefer to naval men. They have the fresh, vigorous, healthy tone of their own sea life in all they say."

"Yes; you'd have found him vigorous enough, I promise you."

"And why did you consult your sister at all?"

"I did not consult her; she got all out of me by cross-questioning. She began by saying 'that man is a mystery to me; he has not come down here to look after the widow nor Isabella; he's not thinking of politics nor the borough; there's no one here that he wants or cares for. What can he be at?'"

"Couldn't you have told her that he was one of those men who have lived so much in the world it is a luxury to them to live a little out of it? Just as it is a relief to sit in a darkened room after your eyes have been dazzled with too strong light. Couldn't you have said, He delights to talk and walk with me, because he sees that he may expand freely, and say what comes uppermost, without any fear of an unfair inference? That, for the same reason—the pleasure of an unrestricted intercourse—he wishes to know old Mrs. Butler, and talk with her—over anything, in short? Just to keep mind and faculties moving—as a light breeze stirs a lake and prevents stagnation?"

"Well. I'm not going to perform Zephyr—even in such a high cause."

"Couldn't you have said, We had a pleasant walk and a mild cigarette together—*voilà tout?*" said he, languidly.

"I think it would be very easy to hate you—hate you cordially—Mr. Norman Maitland."

"So I've been told—and some have even tried it, but always unsuccessfully."

"Who is this wonderful foreigner they are making so much of at the Castle and the Viceregal Lodge?" cried Mark from one of the window recesses, where he was reading a newspaper. "Maitland, you who know all these people, who is the Prince Caffarelli?"

"Caffarelli! it must be the Count," cried Maitland, hurrying over to see the paragraph. "The Prince is upwards of eighty; but his son, Count Caffarelli, is my dearest friend in the world. What could have brought him over to Ireland?"

"Ah! there is the very question he himself is asking about the great Mr. Norman Maitland," said Mrs. Trafford, smiling.

"My reasons are easily stated. I had an admirable friend, who could secure me a most hospitable reception. I came here to enjoy the courtesies of country home life in a perfection I scarcely believed they could attain to. The most unremit-

ting attention to one's comfort, combined with the wildest liberty."

"And such port wine," interposed the Commodore, "as I am free to say no other cellar in the province can rival."

"Let us come back to your Prince or Count," said Mark, "whichever he is. Why not ask him down here?"

"Yes; we have room," said Lady Lyle; "the M'Clintocks left this morning."

"By all means, invite him," broke in Mrs. Trafford; "that is, if he be what we conjecture the dear friend of Mr. Maitland might and should be."

"I am afraid to speak of him," said Maitland; "one disserves a friend by any over-praise; but at Naples, and in his own set, he is thought charming."

"I like Italians myself," said Colonel Hoyle. "I had a fellow I picked up at Malta—a certain Geronimo. I'm not sure he was not a Maltese; but such a salad as he could make! There was everything you could think of in it—tomata, eggs, sardines, radishes, beetroot, cucumber."

"Every Italian is a bit of a cook," said Maitland, relieving adroitly the company from the tiresome detail of the Colonel. "I'll back my friend Caffarelli for a dish of maccaroni against all professional artists."

While the Colonel and his wife got into a hot dispute whether there was or was not a slight flavour of parmesan in the salad, the others gathered around Maitland to hear more of his friend. Indeed, it was something new to hear of an Italian of class and condition. They only knew the nation as tenors, or modellers, or language masters. Their compound idea of Italian was a thing of dark skin and dark eyes—very careless in dress—very submissive in aspect—with a sort of subdued fire, however, in look, that seemed to say how much energy was only sleeping there! and when Maitland sketched the domestic ties of a rich magnate of the land, living a life of luxurious indolence, in a sort of childlike simplicity as to what engaged other men in other countries, without a thought for questions of politics, religion, or literature, living for mere life's sake, he interested them much.

"I shall be delighted to ask him here," said he, at last; "only let me warn you against disappointment. He'll not be witty like a Frenchman, nor profound like a German, nor energetic like an Englishman—he'll neither want to gain knowledge nor impart it. He'll only ask to be permitted to enjoy the pleasures of a very charming society without any

demand being made upon him to contribute anything—to make him fancy, in short, that he knew you all years and years ago, and has just come back out of cloudland to renew the intimacy. Will you have him after this? "

"By all means," was the reply. "Go and write your letter to him."

Maitland went to his room, and soon wrote the following:—

"CARO CARLO MIO,

"Who'd have thought of seeing you in Ireland? but I have scarce courage to ask you how and why you came here, lest you retort the question upon myself. For the moment, however, I am comfortably established in a goodish sort of country-house, with some pretty women, and, thank Heaven, no young men save one son of the family, whom I have made sufficiently afraid of me to repress all familiarities. They beg me to ask you here, and I see nothing against it. We eat and drink very well. The place is healthy, and though the climate is detestable, it braces and gives appetite. We shall have, at all events, ample time to talk over much that interests us both, and so I say, Come!

"The road is by Belfast, and thence to Coleraine, where we shall take care to meet you. I ought to add that your host's name is Sir Arthur Lyle, an Anglo-Indian, but who, thank your stars for it! being a civilian, has neither shot tigers nor stuck pigs. It will also be a relief to you to learn that there's no sport of any kind in the neighbourhood, and there cannot be the shade of a pretext for making you mount a horse or carry a gun, nor can any insidious tormentor persecute you with objects of interest or antiquity; and so, once again, Come—and believe me, ever your most cordial friend,

"N. MAITLAND.

"There is no reason why you should not be here by Saturday, so, that, if nothing contrary is declared, I shall look out for you by that day; but write at all events."

CHAPTER X.

A BLUNDER.

Sir Arthur Lyle was a county dignity, and somewhat fond of showing it. It is true he could not compete with the old blood of the land, or contest place with an O'Neil or an O'Hara; but his wealth gave him a special power, and it was a power that all could appreciate. There was no mistake about one who could head a subscription by a hundred pounds, or write himself patron of a school or a hospital with a thousand! And then his house was more splendid, his servants more numerous, their liveries finer, his horses better, than his neighbours; and he was not above making these advantages apparent. Perhaps his Indian experiences may have influenced his leanings, and taught him to place a higher value on show and all the details of external greatness. On everything that savoured of a public occasion, he came with all the pomp and parade of a sovereign. A meeting of poor-law guardians, a committee of the county infirmary, a board of railway directors, were all events to be signalized by his splendid appearance.

His coach and four, and his outriders—for he had outriders—were admirable in all their appointments. Royalty could not have swung upon more perfectly balanced nor easier springs, nor could a royal team have beat the earth with a grander action or more measured rhythm. The harness—bating the excess of splendour—was perfect. It was massive and well-fitting. As for the servants, a master of the horse could not have detected an inaccurate fold in their cravats, nor a crease in their silk stockings. Let the world be as critical or slighting as it may, these things are successes. They are trifles only to him who has not attempted them. Neither is it true to say that money can command them, for there is much in them that mere money cannot do. There is a keeping in all details—a certain "tone" throughout, and, above all, a discipline the least flaw in which would convert a solemn display into a mockery.

Neighbours might criticize the propriety or canvass the taste

of so much ostentation, but none, not the most sarcastic or scrutinizing, could say one word against the display itself; and so, when on a certain forenoon the dense crowd of the market-place scattered and fled right and left to make way for the prancing leaders of that haughty equipage, the sense of admiration overcame even the unpleasant feeling of inferiority, and that flunkeyism that has its hold on humanity felt a sort of honour in being hunted away by such magnificence.

Through the large square—or Diamond, as the northerns love to call it—of the town they came, upsetting apple-stalls and crockery-booths, and frightening old peasant women, who with a goose under one arm and a hank of yarn under the other, were bent on enterprises of barter and commerce. Sir Arthur drove up to the bank, of which he was the governor and on whose steps, to receive him, now stood the other members of the board. With his massive gold watch in hand, he announced that the fourteen miles had been done in an hour and sixteen minutes, and pointed to the glossy team, whose swollen veins stood out like whip-cord, to prove that there was no distress to the cattle. The board chorussed assent, and one—doubtless an ambitious man—actually passed his hand down the back sinews of a wheeler, and said: "Cool as spring-water, I pledge my honour." Sir Arthur smiled benignly, looked up at the sky, gave an approving look at the sun as though to say, 'not bad for Ireland'—and entered the bank.

It was about five o'clock in the same evening when the great man again appeared at the same place; he was flushed and weary-looking. Some rebellious spirits—is not the world full of them?—had dared to oppose one of his ordinances. They had ventured to question some subsidy that he would accord, or refuse, to some local line of railroad. The opposition had deeply offended him; and though he had crushed it, it had wounded him. He was himself the bank!—its high repute, its great credit, its large connection, were all of his making; and that same Mr. M'Candlish who had dared to oppose him, was a creature of his own—that is, he had made him a tithe-valuator, or a road-inspector, or a stamp distributor, or a something or other of the hundred petty places which he distributed just as the monks of old gave alms at the gates of their convents.

Sir Arthur whispered a word to Mr. Boyd, the secretary, as he passed downstairs. "How does M'Candlish stand with the bank? He has had advances lately—send me a note of them." And thus, bent on reprisals, he stood waiting for that gorgeous

equipage which was now standing fully ready in the inn yard, while the coachman was discussing a chop and a pot of porter. "Why is not he ready?" asked Sir Arthur, impatiently.

"He was getting a nail in Blenheim's off fore-shoe, sir," was the ready reply; and as Blenheim was a blood bay sixteen-three, and worth two hundred and fifty pounds, there was no more to be said; and so Sir Arthur saw the rest of the board depart on jaunting-cars, gigs, or dog-carts as it might be—humble men with humble conveyances, that could take them to their homes without the delays that wait upon greatness.

"Anything new stirring, Boyd?" asked Sir Arthur, trying not to show that he was waiting for the pleasure of his coachman.

"No, sir; all dull as ditch-water."

"We want rain, I fancy—don't we?"

"We'd not be worse for a little, sir. The after-grass, at least, would benefit by it."

"Why don't you pave this town better, Boyd? I'm certain it was these rascally stones twisted Blenheim's shoe."

"Our corporation will do nothing, sir—nothing," said the other, in a whisper.

"Who is that fellow with the large whiskers, yonder—on the steps of the hotel? He looks as if he owned the town."

"A foreigner, Sir Arthur; a Frenchman or a German, I believe. He came over this morning to ask if we knew the address of Mr. Norman Maitland."

"Count Caffarelli," muttered Sir Arthur to himself—"what a chance that I should see him! How did he come?"

"Posted, sir; slept at Cookstown last night, and came here to breakfast."

Though the figure of the illustrious stranger was very far from what Sir Arthur was led to expect, he knew that personal appearance was not so distinctive abroad as in England, and so he began to con over to himself what words of French he could muster, to make his advances. Now, had it been Hindostance that was required, Sir Arthur would have opened his negotiations with all the florid elegance that could be wished; but French was a tongue in which he had never been a proficient, and, in his ordinary life, had little need of. He thought, however, that his magnificent carriage and splendid horses would help him out of the blunders of declensions and genders, and that what he wanted in grammar he could make up in greatness. "Follow me to M'Grotty's," said he to his coachman, and took the way across the square.

Major M'Caskey—for it was no other than that distinguished gentleman—was standing with both hands in the pockets of a very short shooting-jacket, and a clay pipe in his mouth, as Sir Arthur, courteously uncovering, bowed his way up the steps, saying something in which *l'honneur*, *la félicité*, and *infiniment flatté*, floated amidst a number of less intelligibly rendered syllables, ended the whole with "*Ami de mon ami*, M. Norman Maitland."

Major M'Caskey raised his hat straight above his head and replaced it, listening calmly to the embarrassed attempts of the other, and then coldly replied in French, "I have the honour to be the friend of M. Maitland—how and when can I see him?"

"If you will condescend to be my guest, and allow me to offer you a seat with me to Lyle Abbey, you will see your friend." And, as Sir Arthur spoke, he pointed to his carriage.

"Ah, and this is yours? *Pardie!* it's remarkably well done. I accept at once. Fetch down my portmanteau and the pistol-case," said he to a small, ill-looking boy in a shabby green livery, and to whom he spoke in a whisper; while, turning to Sir Arthur, he resumed his French. "This I call a real piece of good-fortune—I was just saying to myself, 'here I am; and though he says, Come! how are we to meet?'"

"But you knew, Count, that we were expecting you."

"Nothing of the kind. All I knew was his message, 'Come here.' I had no anticipation of such pleasant quarters as you promise me."

Seated in the post of honour on the right of Sir Arthur, the Major, by way of completing the measure of his enjoyments, asked leave to smoke. The permission was courteously accorded, and away they rolled over the smooth highway to the pleasant measure of that stirring music—the trot of four spanking horses.

Two—three—four efforts did Sir Arthur make at conversation, but they all ended in sad failure. He wanted to say something about the crops, but he did not remember the French for "oats;" he wished to speak of the road, but he knew not the phrase for "grand jury;" he desired to make some apology for a backward season, but he might as well have attempted to write a Greek ode, and so he sat and smiled and waved his hand, pointing out objects of interest, and interjectionally jerking out, "Bons—braves—très braves—but poor—pauvres—très pauvres—light soil—légère, you understand," and with a vigorous "hem" satisfied himself that he had said something intelligible. After this no more attempts at conversation were

made, for the Major had quietly set his companion down for an intense bore, and fell back upon his tobacco for solace.

"*La!*" cried the Baronet, after a long silence—and he pointed with his finger to a tall tower, over which a large flag was waving, about half a mile away—"Là! Notre château—Lyle Abbey—moi;" and he tapped his breast to indicate the personal interest that attached to the spot.

"Je vous en fais mes compliments," cried M'Caskey, who chuckled at the idea of such quarters, and very eloquently went on to express the infinite delight it gave him to cultivate relations with a family at once so amiable and so distinguished. The happy hazard which brought him was in reality another tie that bound him to the friendship of that "cher Maitland." Delivered of this, the Major emptied his pipe, replaced it in its case, and then, taking off his hat, ran his hands through his hair, arranged his shirt-collar, and made two or three other efforts at an improvised toilet.

"We are late—*en retard*—I think," said Sir Arthur, as they drew up at the door, where two sprucely-dressed servants stood to receive them. "We dine—at eight—eight," said he, pointing to that figure on his watch. "You'll have only time to dress—dress;" and he touched the lappet of his coat, for he was fairly driven to pantomime to express himself. "Hailes," cried he to a servant in discreet black, "show the Count to his room, and attend to him; his own man has not come on, it seems." And then, with many bows, and smiles, and courteous gestures, consigned his distinguished guest to the care of Mr. Hailes, and walked hurriedly upstairs to his own room.

"Such a day as I have had," cried he, as he entered the dressing-room, where Lady Lyle was seated with a French novel. "Those fellows at the bank, led on by that creature M'Candlish, had the insolence to move an amendment to that motion of mine about the drainage loan. I almost thought they'd have given me a fit of apoplexy; but I crushed them: and I told Boyd, 'If I see any more of this, I don't care from what quarter it comes—if these insolences be repeated—I'll resign the direction. It's no use making excuses, pleading that you misunderstood this or mistook that, Boyd,' said I. 'If it occurs again, I go.' And then, as if this was not enough, I've had to talk French all the way out. By the way, where's Maitland?"

"Talk French! what do you mean by that?"

"Where's Maitland, I say?"

"He's gone off with Mark to Larne. They said they d not be back to dinner."

"Here's more of it; we shall have this foreign fellow on our hands till he comes—this Italian Count. I found him at M'Grotty's, and brought him back with me."

"And what is he like? is he as captivating as his portrait bespeaks?"

"He is, to my mind, as vulgar a dog as ever I met: he smoked beside me all the road, though he saw how his vile tobacco set me a-coughing; and he stretched his legs over the front seat of the carriage, where, I promise you, his boots have left their impress on the silk lining; and he poked his cane at Crattle's wig, and made some impertinent remark which I couldn't catch. I never was very enthusiastic about foreigners, and the present specimen has not made a convert of me."

"Maitland likes him," said she, languidly.

"Well, then, it is an excellent reason not to like Maitland. There's the second bell already. By the way, this Count, I suppose, takes you in to dinner?"

"I suppose so, and it is very unpleasant, for I am out of the habit of talking French. I'll make Alice sit on the other side of him and entertain him."

The news that the distinguished Italian friend of Mr. Norman Maitland had arrived, created a sort of sensation in the house, asd as the guests dropped into the drawing-room before dinner there was no other topic than the count. The door at last opened for his *entrée;* and he came in unannounced, the servant being probably unable to catch the name he gave. In the absence of her father and mother, Mrs. Trafford did the honours, and received him most courteously, presenting the other guests to him, or him to them, as it might be. When it came to the turn of the Commodore, he started, and muttered, "Eh, very like, the born image of him!" and colouring deeply at his own awkwardness, mumbled out a few unmeaning commonplaces. As for the Major, he eyed him with one of his steadiest stares—unflinching, unblenching; and even said to Mrs. Trafford in a whisper, "I didn't catch the name; was it Green you said?" Seated between Lady Lyle and Mrs. Trafford, M'Caskey felt that he was the honoured guest of the evening: Maitland's absence, so feelingly deplored by the others, gave him little regret; indeed, instinct told him that they were not men to like each other, and he was all the happier that he had the field for a while his own. It was not a very easy task to be the pleasant man of an Irish country-house, in a foreign tongue; but, if any man could have success, it was M'Caskey. The incessant play of his features, the varied tones of his voice,

his extraordinary gestures, appealed to those who could not follow his words, and led them very often to join in the laughter which his sallies provoked from others. He was, it is true, the exact opposite to all they had been led to expect—he was neither well-looking, nor distinguished, nor conciliatory in manner—there was not a trace of that insinuating softness and gentleness Maitland had spoken of—he was, even to those who could not follow his speech, one of the most coolly unabashed fellows they had ever met, and made himself at home with a readiness that said much more for his boldness than for his breeding; and yet, withal, each was pleased in turn to see how he out-talked some heretofore tyrant of conversation, how impudently he interrupted a bore, and how mercilessly he pursued an antagonist whom he had vanquished. It is not at all improbable, too, that he owed something of his success to that unconquerable objection people feel at confessing that they do not understand a foreign language—the more when that language is such a cognate one as French. What a deal of ecstacy does not the polite world expend upon German drama and Italian tragedy, and how frequently are people moved to every imaginable emotion, without the slightest clue to the intention of the charmer! If he was great at the dinner-table he was greater in the drawing-room. Scarcely was coffee served than he was twanking away with a guitar, and singing a Spanish muleteer song, with a jingling imitation of bells for the accompaniment: or seated at the piano he carolled out a French canzonette descriptive of soldier life, far more picturesque than it was proper; and all this time there was the old Commodore cruising above and below him, eyeing and watching him—growing perfectly feverish with the anxiety of his doubts, and yet unable to confirm or refute them. It was a suspicious craft; he felt that he had seen it before, and knew the rig well, and yet he was afraid to board and say, "Let me look at your papers."

"I say, Beck, just go slyly up and say something accidently about Barbadoes; don't ask any questions, but remark that the evening is close, or the sky threatening, or the air oppressive, just as it used to be before a tornado there." The old sailor watched her, as he might have watched a boat party on a cutting-out expedition; he saw her draw nigh the piano; he thought he could trace all the ingenious steps by which she neared her object; and he was convinced that she had at last thrown the shell on board him; but what was his grievous disappointment, as he saw that the little fellow had turned to

her with a look of warmest admiration, and actually addressed a very ardent love-song to the eyes that were then bent upon him. The Commodore made signals to cease firing and fall back, but in vain. She was too deeply engaged to think of orders; and there she stood to be admired, and worshipped, and adored, in all the moods and tenses of a French "romance." But Miss Rebecca Graham was not the only victim of the Major's captivations; gradually the whole company of the drawing-room had gathered round the piano, some to wonder, some to laugh at, some to feel amused by, and not a few to feel angry with, that little fiery-eyed impertinent-looking fellow, who eyed the ladies so languishingly, and stared at the men as if asking, "Who'll quarrel with me?" You might not like, but it was impossible to ignore him. There was, too, in his whole air and bearing a conscious sense of power—a sort of bold self-reliance—that dignifies even impudence; and as he sat in his chair with head up and hands vigorously striking the chords of the piano, he looked, as it is by no means improbable that he felt, "M'Caskey against the field." It was in the midst of hearty applause at a song he had just completed, that Maitland entered the room. In the hall he had learned from the servants that his foreign friend had arrived, and he hurried forward to greet him. Rather puzzled at the vociferous gaiety of the company, he made his way through the crowd and approached the piano, and then stood staring on every side, to find out his friend. Though he saw the Major, his eye only rested passingly on him, as it ranged eagerly to catch the features of another.

"He's very amusing, though not in the least what you led us to expect," whispered Mrs. Trafford.

"Who is it of whom you are speaking?"

"Your friend yonder, the Count Caffarelli."

"What—that man?" cried Maitland, as he grew pale with passion; and now, pushing forward, he leaned over the back of the music-stool, and whispered, "Who are you that call yourself Count Caffarelli?"

"Is your name Maitland?" said the other, with perfect coolness.

"Yes."

"Mine is M'Caskey, sir."

"And by what presumption do I find you here?"

"This is not the place nor the moment for explanations; but if you want or prefer exposures, don't baulk your fancy; I'm as ready as you are."

Maitland reeled back as if from a blow, and looked positively

ill; and then laughingly turning to the company, he said some common-place words about his ill luck in being late to hear the last song.

"Well, it must be the last for to-night," said Mr. M'Caskey, rising. "I have really imposed too much upon every one's forbearance."

After a little of the usual skirmishing—the entreaties and the coy refusals—the recollection of that charming thing you sang for us at Woodpark—and the doubts lest they had brought no music with them—the Misses Graham sat down to one of those duets which every one in England seems able to compose and to sing; lackadaisical ditties adapted to the humblest musical proficiency, and unfortunately, too, the very narrowest intelligences. While the remainder of the company, after a brief moment of silence, resumed conversation, Major M'Caskey stepped unobserved from the room—by all, at least, but by Maitland, who speedily followed him, and led by the sound of his footsteps along the corridor, tracked him through the great hall. M'Caskey was standing on the lawn, and in the act of lighting his cigar, as Maitland came up.

"Explain this intrusion here, sir, now, if you can," cried Maitland, as he walked straight towards him.

"If you want any explanations from me, you'll have to ask for them more suitably," said the other, coldly.

"I desire to know, under what pretence you assume a name and rank you have no right to, to obtain admission to this house?"

"Your question is easily answered: your instructions to me were, on my arrival at Coleraine, to give myself out for a foreigner, and not to speak English with any one. I have your note in my desk, and think there can be no mistake about its meaning."

"Well, well: I know all that; go on," cried Maitland, impatiently.

M'Caskey smiled, half-insolently, at this show of temper, and continued: "It was, then, in my assumed character of Frenchman, Spaniard, Italian, or whatever you wish—for they are pretty much alike to me—I was standing at the door of the inn, when a rather pompous old fellow, with two footmen after him, came up, and in some execrable French, endeavoured to accost me, mingling your name in his jargon, and inviting me, as well as his language would permit, to return with him to his house. What was I to conclude but that the arrangement was yours? indeed, I never gave a doubt to it."

"When he addressed you as the Count Caffarelli, you might have had such a doubt," said Maitland, sneeringly.

"He called me simply Count," was the reply.

"Well; so far well: there was no assumption of a name, at least."

"None whatever; and if there had been, would the offence have seemed to you so very—very unpardonable?" It is not easy to convey the intense impertinence given to the delivery of this speech by the graduated slowness of every word, and the insolent composure with which it was spoken.

"What do you mean, sir, by this—this insinuation?" cried Maitland.

"Insinuation!—it's none. It is a mere question as to a matter of good taste or good morals."

"I have no time for such discussions, sir," said Maitland, hotly. "I am glad to find that the blunder by which you came here was not of your own provoking, though I cannot see how it makes the explanation less difficult to myself."

"What is your difficulty, may I ask?" cried M'Caskey, coolly.

"Is it no difficulty that I must explain how I know ——" and he stopped suddenly, just as a man might stop on the verge of a precipice, and look horror-struck down into the depth below him. "I mean," said he, recovering himself, "that to enter upon the question of our relations to each other would open the discussion of matters essentially secret. When I have said I know you, the next question will be, 'Who is he?'"

"Well, what is the difficulty there? I am Graf M'Caskey, in Bavaria; Count of Serra-major, in Sicily; Commander of the Order of St. Peter and St. Paul, and a Knight of Malta. I mention these, for I have the 'brevets' with me."

"Very true," said Maitland; "but you are also the same Lieutenant Miles M'Caskey, who served in the 2nd West Indian Regiment, and who left a few unsettled matters between him and the Government there, when he quitted Barbadoes."

"And which they won't rake up, I promise you, if they don't want to hang an ex-governor," said he, laughing. "But none of us, Mr. Maitland, will stand such investigations as these. There's a statute of limitations for morals as well as for small debts."

Maitland winced under the insolent look of the other, and in a tone somewhat shaken, continued, "At all events it will not suit me to open these inquiries. The only piece of good fortune in the whole is, that there was none here who knew you."

"I am not so very sure of that, though," said the Major, with a quiet laugh.

"How so? what do you mean?"

"Why, that there is an old fellow whom I remember to have met on the West Indian Station; he was a lieutenant, I think, on board the *Dwarf*, and he looked as if he were puzzled about me."

"Gambier Graham?"

"That's the man; he followed me about all night, till some one carried him off to play cribbage; but he'd leave his game every now and then to come and stare at me, till I gave him a look that said, 'If you do that again, we'll have a talk over it in the morning.'"

"To prevent which you must leave this to-night, sir," said Maitland. "I am not in the habit of carrying followers about with me to the country-houses where I visit."

A very prolonged whistle was M'Caskey's first reply to this speech, and then he said, "They told me you were one of the cleverest fellows in Europe, but I don't believe a word of it; for, if you were, you would never try to play the game of bully with a man of my stamp. Bigger men than Mr. Norman Maitland have tried that, and didn't come so well out of it."

An insolent toss of the head, as he threw away his cigar, was all Maitland's answer. At last he said, "I suppose, sir, you cannot wish to drive me to say that I do not know you?"

"It would be awkward, certainly; for then I'd be obliged to declare that I *do* know you."

Instantly Maitland seized the other's arm; but M'Caskey, though not by any means so strong a man, flung off the grasp, and started back, saying "Hands off, or I'll put a bullet through you. We've both of us lived long enough amongst foreigners to know that these are liberties that cost blood."

"This is very silly and very unprofitable," said Maitland, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "There ought not, there cannot be, any quarrel between you and me. Though it is no fault of yours that this blunder has occurred, the mistake has its unpleasant side, and may lead to some embarrassment, the more as this old sea-captain is sure to remember you if you meet again. There's only one thing for it, therefore—get away as fast as you can. I'll supply the pretext, and show Sir Arthur in confidence how the whole affair occurred."

M'Caskey shook his head dubiously. "This is not to my liking sir; it smacks of a very ignominious mode of retreat. I am to leave myself to be discussed by a number of perhaps not over-favourable critics, and defended by one who even

shrinks from saying he knows me. No, no; I can't do this."

"But remember you are not the person to whom these people meant to offer their hospitality."

"I am Major Miles M'Caskey," said he, drawing himself up to the full height of his five feet four inches; "and there is no mistake whatever in any consideration that is shown to the man who owns that name."

"Yes, but why are you here—how have you come?"

"I came by the host's invitation, and I look to you to explain how the blunder occurred, and to recognize me afterwards. That is what I expect, and what I insist on."

"And if your old friend the Commodore, whose memory for ugly anecdotes seems inexhaustible, comes out with any unpleasant reminiscences of West Indian life——"

"Leave that to me, Mr. Norman Maitland. I'll take care to see my friend, as you call him, and I'll offer you a trifling wager he'll not be a whit more anxious to claim my acquaintance than you are."

"You appear to have no small reliance on your powers of intimidation, Major," said Maitland with a sneering smile.

"They have never failed me, for I have always backed them with a very steady hand and a correct eye, both of which are much at your service."

Maitland lifted his hat and bowed an acknowledgment.

"I think we are losing our time, each of us, Major M'Caskey. There need be no question of etiquette here. You are, if I understand the matter aright, under my orders. Well, sir, these orders are, that you now start for Castle Durrow, and be prepared by Tuesday next to make me a full report of your proceedings, and produce for me, if necessary, the men you have engaged."

The change effected in the Major's manner at these words was magical; he touched his hat in salute, and listened with all show of respect.

"It is my intention, if satisfied with your report, to recommend you for the command of the legion, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel," continued Maitland; "and I have already written about those advances you mentioned."

"I'll take care that you are satisfied with me," said M'Caskey, respectfully; "I'll start within half-an-hour."

"This is all as it should be. I hope it is our first and last misunderstanding;" and he held out his hand frankly, which

the other grasped and shook cordially. "How are you off for ready cash? Treat me as a comrade, and say freely."

"Not over flush, but I suppose I can rub on," said the Major, with some confusion.

"I have some thirty sovereigns here," said Maitland; "take them, and we'll settle all when we meet."

M'Caskey put the purse in his pocket, and, with the uneasy consciousness of a man ashamed of what he was doing, muttered out a few unmeaning words of thanks, and said, "Good-bye!"

"These condottieri rascals have been troublesome fellows in all ages," said Maitland, as he smoked away alone; "and I suspect they are especially unsuited to our present-day life and its habits. I must rid myself of the Major."

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

By the time Maitland had despatched his man Fenton to meet Count Caffarelli, and prevent his coming to Lyle Abbey, where his presence would be sure to occasion much embarrassment, the company had retired to their rooms, and all was quiet.

Though Mark was curious to know why and how Maitland had disappeared with his foreign friend, he had grown tired thinking over it, and fallen sound asleep. Nor did he hear Maitland as he entered the room and drew nigh his bedside.

"What's wrong—what has happened?" cried Mark, as he started up suddenly on his bed.

"Nothing very serious, but still something worth waking you for; but are you sure you are awake?"

"Yes, yes, perfectly. What is it all about? Who are in it?"

"We are all in it, for the matter of that," said Maitland, with a quiet laugh. "Try and listen to me attentively for a couple of minutes. The man your father brought back with him from Coleraine, believing him to be my friend Caffarelli, was not Caffarelli at all!"

"What! And he pretended to be?"

"No such thing: hear me out. Your father spoke to him in French; and finding out—I don't exactly know how—that he and I were acquaintances, rushed at once to the conclusion that he must be Caffarelli. I conclude that the interview was not made more intelligible to either party by being carried on in French; but the invitation so frankly given was as freely accepted. The stranger came, dined, and was here in the drawing-room when we came back."

"This is unpardonable. Who is he? What is he?"

"He is a gentleman, I believe, as well born as either of us. I know something—not much—about him, but there are circumstances which, in a manner, prevent me from talking of him. He came down to this part of the world to see me, though I never intended it should have been here."

"Then his intrusion here was not sanctioned by you?"

"No. It was all your father's doing."

"My father's doing, if you like, Maitland, but concurred in and abetted by this man, whoever he is."

"I'll not even say that; he assures me that he accepted the invitation in the belief that the arrangement was made by me."

"And you accept that explanation?"

"Of course I do. I see nothing in it in the smallest degree improbable or unlikely."

"Well, who is he? That is the main point; for it is clear you do not wish us to receive him as a friend of yours."

"I say I'd not have presented him here, certainly; but I'll not go the length of saying he couldn't have been known by any one in this house. He is one of those adventurous fellows whose lives must not be read with the same glasses as those of quieter people. He has knocked about the world for some five-and-twenty years, without apparently having found his corner in it yet. I wanted him—what for, I shall probably tell you one of these days—and some friends of mine found him out for me!"

"One of your mysteries, Maitland," said Mark, laughing.

"Yes, one of my mysteries!"

"Of what nation is he?"

"There, again, I must baulk your curiosity. The fact is, Mark, I can explain nothing about this man without going into matters which I am solemnly bound not to reveal. What I have to ask from you is, that you will explain to your father, and of course to Lady Lyle and your sisters, the mistake that has occurred, and request that they will keep it a secret. He has already gone, so that your guests will probably not discuss him after a day or two."

"Not even so much, for there's a break-up. Old Mrs. Maxwell has suddenly discovered that her birthday will fall on next Friday, and she insists upon going back to Tilney Park to entertain the tenantry, and give a ball to the servants. Most of the people here accompany her, and Isabella and myself are obliged to go. Each of us expects to be her heir, and we have to keep out competitors at all hazards."

"Why has she never thought of me?" said Maitland.

"She means to invite you, at all events; for I heard her consulting my mother how so formidable a personage should be approached—whether she ought to address you in a despatch, or ask for a conference."

"If a choice be given me, I'll stay where I am. The three days I promised you have grown nearer to three weeks, and I do not see the remotest chance of your getting rid of me."

"Will you promise me to stay till I tell you we want your rooms?"

"Ah, my dear fellow, you don't know—you couldn't know—what very tempting words you are uttering. This is such a charming, charming spot, to compose that novel I am—not—writing—that I never mean to leave till I have finished it; but, seriously, speaking like an old friend, am I a bore here? am I occupying the place that is wanted for another? are they tired of me?"

Mark overwhelmed his friend with assurances very honest in the main, that they were only too happy to possess him as their guest, and felt no common pride in the fact that he could find his life there endurable. "I will own now," says he, "that there was a considerable awe of you felt before you came, but you have lived down the fear, and become a positive favourite."

"But who could have given such a version of me as to inspire this?"

"I am afraid I was the culprit," said Mark: "I was rather boastful about knowing you at all, and I suppose I frightened them."

"My dear Lyle, what a narrow escape I had of being positively odious! and I now see with what consummate courtesy my caprices have been treated, when really I never so much as suspected they had been noticed."

There was a touch of sincerity in his accent as he spoke, that vouched for the honesty of his meaning; and Mark, as he looked at him, muttered to himself, "This is the man they call an egotist, and who is only intent on taking his turn out of all around him."

"I think I must let you go to sleep again, Mark," said Maitland, rising. "I am a wretched sleeper myself, and quite forget that there are happy fellows who can take their ten hours of oblivion without any help from the druggist. Without this,"—and he drew a small phial from his waistcoat-pocket—"I get no rest."

"What a bad habit!"

"Isn't almost everything we do a bad habit? Have we ever a humour that recurs to us, that is not a bad habit? Are not the simple things which mean nothing in themselves an evil influence when they grow into requirements and make slaves of us? I suppose it was a bad habit that made me a bad sleeper,

and I turn to another bad habit to correct it. The only things which are positively bad habits are those that require an effort to sustain, or will break down under us without we struggle to support them. To be morose is not one jot a worse habit than to be agreeable; for the time will come when you are indisposed to be pleasant, and the company in which you find yourself are certain to deem the humour as an offence to themselves; but there is a worse habit than this, which is to go on talking to a man whose eyes are closing with sleep. Good-night."

Maitland said no more than the truth when he declared how happy he found himself in that quiet unmolested existence which he led at Lyle Abbey. To be free in every way—to indulge his humour to be alone or in company—to go and come as he liked, were great boons; but they were even less than the enjoyment he felt in living amongst total strangers—persons who had never known, never heard of him—for whom he was not called on to make any effort, or support any character.

No man ever felt more acutely the slavery that comes of sustaining a part before the world, and being as strange and as inexplicable as people required he should be. While a very young man, it amused him to trifle in this fashion, and to set absurd modes afloat for imitation; and he took a certain spiteful pleasure in seeing what a host of followers mere eccentricity could command. As he grew older he wearied of this, and, to be free of it, wandered away to distant and unvisited countries, trying the old and barren experiment whether new sensations might not make a new nature. *Cœlum non animum mutant*, says the adage, and he came back pretty much as he went, with this only difference, that he now cared only for quietness and repose. Not the contemplative repose of one who sought to reflect without disturbance, so much as the peaceful isolation that suited indolence. He fancied how he would have liked to be the son of that house, and dream away life in that wild secluded spot; but, after all, the thought was like the epicure's notion of how contented he could be with a meal of potatoes!

As the day broke, he was roused from his light sleep by the tumult and noise of the departing guests. He arose and watched them through the half-closed jalousies. It was picturesque enough, in that crisp, fresh, frosty air, to see the groups as they gathered on the long terrace before the door; while equipages the most varied drew up—here a family-coach

with long-tailed "blacks;" there a smart britschka, with spanking greys: a tandem, too, there was for Mark's special handling; and, conspicuous by its pile of luggage in the "well," stood Gambier Graham's outside jaunting-car—a large basket of vegetables and fruit, and a hamper of lobsters, showing how such guests are propitiated, even in the hours of leave-taking.

Maitland watched Isabella in all her little attentive cares to Mrs. Maxwell, and saw, as he thought, the heir-expectant in every movement. He fancied that the shawl she carried on her arm was the old lady's, and was almost vexed when he saw her wrap it around her own shoulders. "Well, that at least is sycophancy," muttered he, as he saw her clutch up a little white Maltese terrier and kiss it; but, alas for his prescience! the next moment she had given the dog to a servant to carry back into the house, and so it was her own that she was parting from, and not Mrs. Maxwell's that she was caressing!

It is strange to say that he was vexed at being disappointed. She was very pretty, very well-mannered, and very pleasing; but he longed to find that all the charm and grace about her were conventional; he wished to believe that "the whole thing," as he called life, was a mere trick, where all cheated in proportion to their capacities. Mark had been honest enough to own that they were fortune hunting, and Isabella certainly could not be ignorant of the stake she played for.

One by one the carriages drew up and moved away, and now Gambier Graham's car stood before the door, alone; for the crowd of footmen who had thronged to press their services on the others, gradually melted away, hopeless of exacting a black-mail from the old Commodore. While Maitland stood watching the driver, who, in a composite sort of costume, rather more gardener than coachman, amused himself flicking with his whip imaginary flies off the old mare's neck and withers, a smart tap came to the door, while a hasty voice called out, "May I come in?"

"Let me first hear who you are?" said Maitland.

"Commodore Graham," was the answer.

In a moment it flashed across Maitland that the old sailor had come to reveal his discovery of M'Caskey. Just as quickly did he decide that it was better to admit him, and, if possible, contrive to make the story seem a secret between themselves.

"Come in, by all means—the very man I wanted to see," said Maitland, as he opened the door, and gave him a cordial

shake-hands. "I was afraid you were going without seeing me, Commodore; and, early as it was, I got up and was dressing in hope to catch you."

"That I call hearty—downright hearty—Maitland."

Maitland actually started at this familiar mention of him by one whom he had never met till a few days before.

"Rather a rare event in your life to be up at this hour, I'll be sworn—except when you haven't been to bed, eh?" And he laughed heartily at what he fancied was a most witty conceit. "You see we're all off! We've had springs on our cables these last twenty-four hours, with this frolicsome old woman, who would insist on being back for her birthday; but she's rich, Maitland — immensely rich, and we all worship her!"

Maitland gave a faint shrug of the shoulders, as though he deplored the degeneracy, but couldn't help it.

"Yes, yes—I'm coming," cried the Commodore, shouting from the open window to his daughters beneath. "The girls are impatient, they want to be at Lesliesford when the others are crossing. There's a fresh on the river, and it's better to get some stout fellows to guide the carriages through the water. I wanted greatly to have five minutes alone with you—five would do—half of it perhaps between men of the world, as we are. You know about what."

"I suspect I do," said Maitland, quietly.

"I saw, too," resumed Graham, "that you wished to have no talk about it here, amongst all these gossiping people. Wasn't I right?"

"Perfectly right; you appreciated me thoroughly."

"What I said was this,—Maitland knows the world well. He'll wait till he has his opportunity of talking the matter over with myself. He'll say, 'Graham and I will understand one another at once.' One minute, only one," screamed he out from the window. "Couldn't you come down and just say a word or two to them? They'd like it so much."

Maitland muttered something about his costume.

"Ah! there it is. You fellows will never be seen till you are in full fig. Well, I must be off. Now, then, to finish what we've been saying. You'll come over next week to Port-Graham—that's my little place, though there's no port, nor anything like a port, within ten miles of it—and we'll arrange everything. If I'm an old fellow, Maitland, I don't forget that I was once a young one—mind that, my boy." And the Commodore had to wipe his eyes, with the laughter at his

drollery. "Yes; here I am," cried he again; and then turning to Maitland, shook his hand in both his own, repeating, "On Wednesday—Wednesday to dinner—not later than five, remember" — he hastened down the stairs, and scrambled up on the car beside his eldest daughter, who, apparently, had already opened a flood-gate of attack on him for his delay.

"Insupportable old bore," muttered Maitland, as he waved his hand from the window, and smiled his blandest salutations to the retreating party. "What a tiresome old fool to fancy that I am going over to Graham-pond, or port, or whatever it is, to talk over an incident that I desire to have forgotten! Besides, when once I have left this neighbourhood, he may discuss M'Caskey every day after his dinner—he may write his life, for anything I care."

With this parting reflection he went down to the garden, strolling listlessly along the dew-spangled alleys, and carelessly tossing aside with his cane the apple-blossoms, which lay thick as snow-flakes on the walks. While thus lounging, he came suddenly upon Sir Arthur, as, hoe in hand, he imagined himself doing something useful.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Maitland," cried he, "Mark has just told me of the stupid mistake I made. Will you be generous enough to forgive me?"

"It is from me, sir, that the apologies must come," began Maitland.

"Nothing of the kind, my dear Mr. Maitland. You will overwhelm me with shame if you say so. Let us each forget the incident; and believe me, I shall feel myself your debtor by the act of oblivion." He shook Maitland's hand warmly, and, in an easier tone added, "What good news I have heard! You are not tired of us—not going!"

"I cannot—I told Mark this morning—I don't believe there is a road out of this."

"Well, wait here till I tell you it is fit for travelling," said Sir Arthur, pleasantly, and addressed himself once more to his labours as a gardener.

Meanwhile Maitland threw himself down on a garden-bench, and cried aloud, "This is the real thing, after all—this is actual repose. Not a word of political intrigue, no snares, no tricks, no deceptions, and no defeats; no waking to hear of our friends arrested, and our private letters in the hands of a Police Prefect. No horrid memories of the night before, and that run of ill-luck that has left us almost beggars. I wonder

how long the charm of this tranquillity would endure, or is it like all other anodynes, which lose their calming power by habit? I'd certainly like to try."

"Well, there is no reason why you shouldn't," said a voice from the back of the summer-house, which he knew to be Mrs. Trafford's.

He jumped up to overtake her, but she was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

MAITLAND'S VISIT.

"WHAT was it you were saying about flowers, Jeanie? I was not minding," said Mrs. Butler, as she sat at her window watching the long heaving roll of the sea, as it broke along the jagged and rugged shore, her thoughts the while far beyond it.

"I was saying, ma'am, that the same man that came with the books t'other day brought these roses, and asked very kindly how you were."

"You mean the same gentleman, lassie, who left his card here!" said the old lady, correcting that very northern habit of ignoring all differences of condition.

"Well, I mind he was, for he had very white hands, and a big bright ring on one of his fingers."

"You told him how sorry I was not to be able to see him—that these bad headaches have left me unable to receive any one?"

"Na! I didn't say that," said she, half-doggedly.

"Well, and what did you say?"

"I just said, she's thinking too much about her son, who is away from home, to find any pleasure in a strange face." He laughed a little quiet laugh, and said, 'There is good sense in that, Jeanie, and I'll wait for a better moment.'"

"You should have given my message as I spoke it to you," said the mistress, severely.

"I'm no sae blind that I canna see the differ between an aching head and a heavy heart. Ye're just frettin', and there's naething else the matter wi' you. There he goes now, the same man—the same gentleman, I mean," said she, with a faint scoff. "He aye goes back by the strand, and climbs the white rocks opposite the Skerries."

"Go and say that I'll be happy to have a visit from him to-morrow, Jeanie; and mind put nothing of your own in it, lassie, but give my words as I speak them."

With a toss of her head Jeanie left the room, and soon after was seen skipping lightly from rock to rock towards the beach

beneath. To the old lady's great surprise, however, Jeanie, instead of limiting herself to the simple words of her message, appeared to be talking away earnestly and fluently with the stranger; and, worse than all, she now saw that he was coming back with her, and walking straight for the cottage. Mrs. Butler had but time to change her cap and smooth down the braids of her snow white hair, when the key turned in the lock, and Jeanie ushered in Mr. Norman Maitland. Nothing could be more respectful or in better taste than Maitland's approach. He blended the greatest deference with an evident desire to make her acquaintance, and almost at once relieved her from what she so much dreaded—the first meeting with a stranger.

"Are you of the Clairlaverock Maitlands, sir?" asked she, timidly.

"Very distantly, I believe, madam. We all claim Sir Peter as the head of the family; but my own branch settled in India two generations back, and, I shame to say, thought of everything but genealogy."

"There was a great beauty, a Miss Hester Maitland. When I was a girl she married a lord, I think?"

"Yes, she married a Viscount Kinross, a sort of cousin of her own; though I am little versed in family history. The truth is, madam, younger sons who had to work their way in the world were more anxious to bequeath habits of energy and activity to their children than ideas of blazons and quarterings."

The old lady sighed at this, but it was a sigh of relief. She had been dreading not a little a meeting with one of those haughty Maitlands, associated in her childhood's days with thoughts of wealth and power, and that dominance that smacks of, if it does not mean, insolence; and now she found one who was not ashamed to belong to a father who had toiled for his support and worked hard for his livelihood. And yet it was strange with what tenacity she clung to a topic that had its terrors for her. She liked to talk of the family and high connections and great marriages of all these people with whose names she was familiar as a girl, but whom she had never known, if she had so much as seen.

"My poor husband, sir—you may have heard of him—Colonel Walter Butler, knew all these things by heart. You had only to ask when did so-and-so die, and who married such a one, and he'd tell you as if out of a book."

"I have heard of Colonel Butler, madam. His fame as a soldier is widespread in India—indeed, I had hoped to have

made his son's acquaintance when I came here; but I believe he is with his regiment."

"No, sir, he's not in the service," said she, flushing.

"Ah! a civilian, then. Well, madam, the Butlers have shown capacity in all careers."

"My poor boy has not had the chance given him as yet, Mr. Maitland. We were too poor to think of a profession; and so waiting and hoping, though it's not very clear for what, we let the time slip over, and there he is a great grown man! as fine a young fellow as you ever looked on, and as good as handsome, but yet he cannot do one hand's turn that would give him bread —and yet, ask your friends at the Abbey if there's a grace or gift of a gentleman he is not the master of."

"I think I know how the Lyles speak of him, and what affection they bear him."

"Many would condemn me, sir," cried she, warming with the one theme that engaged her whole heart, "for having thrown my boy amongst those so far above him in fortune, and given him habits and ways that his own condition must deny him; but it was my pride to see him in the station that his father held, and to know that he became it. I suppose there are dangers in it too," said she, rather answering his grave look than anything he had said. "I take it, sir, there are great temptations, mayhap over-strong temptations, for young natures."

Maitland moved his head slightly, to imply that he assented.

"And it's not unlikely the poor boy felt that himself; for when he came home t'other night he looked scared and worn, and answered me shortly and abruptly in a way he never does, and made me sit down on the spot and write a letter for him to a great man who knew his father, asking—it is hard to say what I asked, and what I could have expected."

"Colonel Butler's son can scarcely want friends, madam," said Maitland, courteously.

"What the world calls friends are usually relatives, and we have but one who could pretend to any sort of influence, and his treatment of my poor husband debars us from all knowledge of him. He was an only brother, a certain Sir Omerod Butler. You may perhaps have heard of him?"

"Formerly British Minister at Naples, I think?"

"The same, sir: a person, they tell me, of great abilities, but very eccentric, and peculiar—indeed, so his letters bespeak him."

"You have corresponded with him then, madam?"

"No, sir, never; but he wrote constantly to my husband before

our marriage. They were at that time greatly attached to each other; and the elder, Sir Omerod, was always planning and plotting for his brother's advancement. He talked of him as if he was his son, rather than a younger brother; in fact, there were eighteen years between them. Our marriage broke up all this. The great man was shocked at the humble connection, and poor Walter would not bear to have me slightingly spoken of; but dear me, Mr. Maitland, how I am running on! To talk of such things to you! I am really ashamed of myself! What will you think of me?"

"Only what I have learned to think of you, madam, from all your neighbours—with sentiments of deep respect and sincere interest."

"It is very good of you to say it, sir; and I wish Tony was back here to know you and thank you for all your attention to his mother."

"You are expecting him then?" asked he.

"Well, sir, I am, and I am not. One letter is full of hope and expectancy; by Thursday or Friday he's to have some tidings about this or that place; and then comes another, saying how Sir Harry counsels him to go out and make friends with his uncle. All mammon, sir — nothing but mammon; just because this old man is very rich, and never was married."

"I suspect you are in error there, madam. Sir Omerod was married at least twenty years ago, when I first heard of him at Naples."

She shook her head doubtfully, and said, "I have always been told the reverse, sir. I know what you allude to, but I have reason to believe I am right, and there is no Lady Butler."

"It is curious enough, madam, that through a chance acquaintance on a railroad train, I learned all about the lady he married. She was an Italian."

"It's the same story I have heard myself, sir. We only differ about the ending of it. She was a stage-player, or a dancer."

"No, madam; a very celebrated prima donna."

"Ay," said she, as though there was no discrepancy there. "I heard how the old fool—for he was no young man then—got smitten with her voice and her beauty, and made such a fuss about her, taking her here and there in his state coach, and giving great entertainments for her at the Embassy, where the arms of England were over the door; and I have been told that

the King heard of it, and wrote to Sir Omerod a fearful letter, asking how he dared so to degrade the escutcheon of the great nation he represented. Ah, you may smile, sir." Maitland had indeed smiled alike at her tale and the energy with which she told it. "You may smile, sir; but it was no matter for laughter, I promise you. His Majesty called on him to resign, and the great Sir Omerod, who wouldn't know his own brother, because he married a minister's daughter, fell from his high station for the sake of—I will not say any hard words; but she was not certainly superior in station to myself, and I will make no other comparison between us."

"I suspect you have been greatly misled about all this, madam," said Maitland, with a quiet grave manner. "Sir Omerod—I heard it from my travelling companion—took his retiring pension and quitted diplomacy the very day he was entitled to it. So far from desiring him to leave, it is said that the Minister of the day pressed him to remain at his post. He has the reputation of possessing no mean abilities, and certainly enjoyed the confidence of the Court to which he was accredited."

"I never heard so much good of him before; and to tell you the truth, Mr. Maitland, if you had warned me that you were his friend, I'd scarcely have been so eager to make your acquaintance."

"Remember, my dear madam, all I have been telling you reached myself as hearsay."

"Well, well," said she, sighing. "He's not over likely to trouble his head about me, and I don't see why I am to fash myself for him. Are you minded to stay much longer in this neighbourhood, Mr. Maitland?" said she, to change the topic.

"I fear not, madam. I have overstayed everything here but the kindness of my hosts. I have affairs which call me abroad, and some two or three engagements, that I have run to the very last hour. Indeed, I will confess to you, I delayed here to meet your son."

"To meet Tony, sir?"

"Yes, madam. In my intercourse with the Lyles I have learned to know a great deal about him; to hear traits of his fine generous nature, his manly frankness, and his courage. These were the testimonies of witnesses who differed widely from each other in age and temperament, and yet they all concurred in saying he was a noble-hearted young fellow, who richly deserved all the fortune that could befall him."

"Oh dear, sir, these are sweet words to his poor mother's

ears. He is all that I have left me, and you cannot know how he makes up to me for want of station and means, and the fifty other things that people who are well-off look for. I do hope he'll come back before you leave this. I'd like to let you see I'm not over boastful about him."

"I have had a project in my head for some days back. Indeed, it was in pursuance of it I have been so persevering in my attempts to see you, madam. It occurred to me, from what Sir Arthur Lyle said of your son, that he was just the person I have long been looking out for—a man of good name and good blood, fresh to the world, neither hackneyed, on the one hand, nor awkwardly ignorant, on the other—well brought up and high-principled—a gentleman, in fact. It has long been a plan of mine to find one such as this, who, calling himself my secretary, would be in reality my companion and my friend—who would be content to share the fortunes of a somewhat wayward fellow for a year or two, till, using what little influence I possess, I could find means of effectually establishing him in life. Now, madam, I am very diffident about making such a proposal to one in every respect my equal, and, I have no doubt, more than my equal in some things; but if he were not my equal, there would be an end to what I desire in the project. In fact, to make the mere difference of age the question of superiority between us, is my plan. We should live together precisely on the terms of equality. In return for that knowledge of life I could impart to him—what I know of the world, not acquired altogether without some sharp experience—he would repay me by that hearty and genial freshness which is the wealth of the young. Now, madam, I will not tire you with any more of my speculations, purely selfish as they are; but will at once say, if, when your son and I meet, this notion of mine is to his taste, all the minor details of it shall not deter him. I know I am not offering a career, but it is yet the first step that will fit him for one. A young fellow, gifted as he is, will needs become, in a couple of years' intercourse with what is pre-eminently society, a man of consummate tact and ability. All that I know of life convinces me that the successful men are the ready-witted men. Of course I intend to satisfy you with respect to myself. You have a right to know the stability of the bank to whom you are intrusting your deposit. At all events, think over my plan, and if nothing has already fallen to your son's hands in London, ask him to come back here and talk it over with me. I can remain here for a week, that is, if I can hope to meet him."

The old lady listened with all attention and patience to this speech. She was pleased by the flattery of it. It was flattery, indeed, to hear that consummately fine gentleman declare that he was ready to accept Tony as his equal in all things, and it was more than flattery to fancy her dear boy mingling in the pleasures and fascinations of the great world, courted and admired, as she could imagine he would be; but there were still drawbacks to all these. The position was that of a dependent; and how would Tony figure in such a post? He was the finest tempered, most generous creature in the world, where no attempt to overbear interfered; but any show of offensive superiority would make a tiger of him.

"Well, well," thought she, "it's not to be rejected all at once, and I'll just talk it over with the minister." "May I consult an old friend and neighbour of mine, sir, before I speak to Tony himself?" said she, timidly.

"By all means, madam; or, if you like it better, let me call on him, and enter more fully into my plan than I have ventured to do with you."

"No, thank you, sir. I'll just talk the matter over with the doctor, and I'll see what he says to it all. This seems a very ungracious way to meet your great kindness, sir; but I was thinking of what a while ago you called my deposit, and so it is —it's all the wealth I possess—and even the thought of resigning it is more than I can bear."

"I hope to convince you one of these days, madam, that you have not invested unprofitably;" and with many courteous assurances that, decide how she might, his desire to serve her should remain, he took his leave, bequeathing, as he passed out, a glow of hope to the poor widow's heart, not the less cheering that she could not freely justify nor even define it

CHAPTER XIII.

TONY IN TOWN.

Day followed day, and Tony Butler heard nothing from the minister. He went down each morning to Downing Street, and interrogated the austere door-keeper, till at length there grew up between that grim official and himself a state of feeling little short of hatred.

"No letter?" would say Tony.

"Look in the rack," was the answer.

"Is this sort of thing usual?"

"What sort of thing?"

"The getting no reply for a week or eight days?"

"I should say it is very usual with certain people."

"What do you mean by certain people?"

"Well, the people that don't have answers to the letters, nor ain't likely to have them."

"Might I ask you another question?" said Tony, lowering his voice, and fixing a very quiet but steady look on the other.

"Yes, if it's a short one."

"It's a very short one. Has no one ever kicked you for your impertinence?"

"Kicked *me*—kicked *me*, sir!" cried the other, while his face became purple with passion.

"Yes," resumed Tony, mildly; "for let me mention it to you in confidence, it's the last thing I mean to do before I leave London."

"We'll see about this, sir, at once," cried the porter, who rushed through the inner door, and tore upstairs like a madman. Tony meanwhile brushed some dust off his coat with a stray clothes-brush near, and was turning to leave the spot, when Skeffington came hurriedly towards him, trying to smother a fit of laughter that would not be repressed.

"What's all this, Butler?" said he. "Here's the whole office in commotion. Willis is up with the chief clerk and old Baynes telling them that you drew a revolver and threatened

his life, and swore if you hadn't an answer by to-morrow at twelve, you'd blow Sir Harry's brains out."

"It's somewhat exaggerated. I had no revolver, and never had one. I don't intend any violence beyond kicking that fellow, and I'll not do even that if he can manage to be commonly civil."

"The Chief wishes to see this gentleman upstairs for a moment," said a pale, sickly youth to Skeffington.

"Don't get flurried. Be cool, Butler, and say nothing that can irritate—mind that," whispered Skeffington, and stole away.

Butler was introduced into a spacious room, partly office, partly library, at the fireplace of which stood two men, a short and a shorter. They were wonderfully alike in externals, being each heavy-looking, white-complexioned serious men, with a sort of dreary severity of aspect, as if the spirit of domination had already begun to weigh down even themselves.

"We have been informed," began the shorter of the two, in a slow deliberate voice, "that you have grossly outraged one of the inferior officers of this department; and although the case is one which demands, and shall have, the attention of the police authorities, we have sent for you—Mr. Brand and I—to express our indignation—eh, Brand?" added he in a whisper.

"Certainly, our indignation," chimed in the other.

"And aware, as we are," resumed the Chief, "that you are an applicant for employment under this department, to convey to you the assurance that such conduct as you have been guilty of, totally debars you—excludes you ——"

"Yes, excludes you," chimed in Brand.

"From the most remote prospect of an appointment!" said the first, taking up a book, and throwing it down with a slap on the table, as though the more emphatically to confirm his words.

"Who are you, may I ask, who pronounce so finally on my prospects?" cried Tony.

"Who are we—who are we?" said the Chief, in a horror at the query. "Will you tell him, Mr. Brand?"

The other was, however, ringing violently at the bell, and did not hear the question.

"Have you sent to Scotland Yard?" asked he of the servant who came to his summons. "Tell Willis to be ready to accompany the officer, and make his charge."

"The gentleman asks who we are!" said Baynes, with a feeble laugh.

"I ask in no sort of disrespect to you," said Butler, "but simply to learn in what capacity I am to regard you. Are you magistrates? Is this a court?"

"No, sir, we are not magistrates," said Brand; "we are heads of departments—departments which we shall take care do not include within their limits persons of your habits and pursuits."

"You can know very little about my habits or pursuits. I promised your hall-porter I'd kick him, and I don't suspect that either you or your little friend there would risk any interference to protect him."

"My Lord!" said a messenger, in a voice of almost tremulous terror, while he flung open both inner and outer door for the great man's approach. The person who entered with a quick active step, was an elderly man, white-whiskered and white-haired, but his figure well set up, and his hat rakishly placed a very little on one side; his features were acute, and betokened promptitude and decision, blended with a sort of jocular humour about the mouth, as though even State affairs did not entirely indispose a man to a jest.

"Don't send that bag off to-night, Baynes, till I come down," said he, hurriedly; "and if any telegrams arrive, send them over to the house. What's this policeman doing at the door?—who is refractory?"

"This—young man," he paused, for he had almost said gentleman—"has just threatened an old and respectable servant of the office with a personal chastisement, my lord."

"Declared he'd break every bone in his body," chimed in Brand.

"Whose body?" asked his lordship.

"Willis's, my lord—the hall-porter—a man, if I mistake not, appointed by your lordship."

"I said I'd kick him," said Tony, calmly.

"Kick Willis?" said my lord, with a forced gravity, which could not, however, suppress a laughing twinkle of his keen grey eyes—"kick Willis?"

"Yes, my lord; he does not attempt to deny it."

"What's your name, sir," asked my lord.

"Butler," was the brief reply.

"The son of—no, not son—but relative of Sir Omerod's?" asked his lordship again.

"His nephew."

"Why, Sir Harry Elphinstone has asked me for something for you. I don't see what I can do for you. It would be an

admirable thing to have some one to kick the porters; but we haven't thought of such an appointment—eh, Baynes? Willis, the very first; most impudent dog. We want a messenger for Bucharest, Brand, don't we?"

"No, my lord; you filled it this morning—gave it to Mr. Beed."

"Cancel Beed, then, and appoint Butler."

"Mr. Beed has gone, my lord—started with the Vienna bag."

"Make Butler supernumerary."

"There are four already, my lord."

"I don't care if there were forty, Mr. Brand! Go and pass your examination, young gentleman, and thank Sir Harry Elphinstone, for this nomination is at his request. I am only sorry you didn't kick Willis." And with this parting speech he turned away, and hopped down stairs to his brougham, with the light step and jaunty air of a man of thirty.

Scarcely was the door closed, when Baynes and Brand retired into a window recess, conversing in lowest whispers, and with much head-shaking. To what a frightful condition the country must come—any country must come—when administered by men of such levity—who make a sport of its interests, and a practical joke of its patronage—was the theme over which they now mourned in common.

"Are you going to make a minute of this appointment, Brand?" asked Baynes. "I declare I'd not do it."

The other pursed up his lips and leaned his head to one side, as though to imply that such a course would be a bold one.

"Will you put his name on your list?"

"I don't know," muttered the other. "I suspect we can do it better. Where have you been educated, Mr. Butler?"

"At home, principally."

"Never at any public school?"

"Never, except you call a village school a public one."

Brand's eyes glistened, and Baynes's returned the sparkle.

"Are you a proficient in French?"

"Far from it. I could spell out a fable, or a page of 'Telemachus,' and even that would push me hard."

"Do you write a good hand?"

"It is legible, but it's no beauty."

"And your arithmetic?"

"Pretty much like my French—the less said about it the better."

"I think that will do, Brand," whispered Baynes.

The other nodded, and muttered, "Of course; and it is the best way to do it."

"These are the points, Mr. Butler," he continued, giving him a printed paper, "on which you will have to satisfy the Civil Service Commissioners; they are, as you see, not very numerous nor very difficult. A certificate as to general conduct and character—British subject—some knowledge of foreign languages—the first four rules of arithmetic—and that you are able to ride——"

"Thank Heaven, there is one thing I can do, and if you ask the Commissioners to take a cast 'cross country, I'll promise them a breather."

Tony never noticed—nor, had he noticed, had he cared for—the grave austerity of the heads of departments at this outburst of enthusiasm. He was too full of his own happiness, and too eager to share it with his mother.

As he gained the street, Sheffington passed his arm through his, and walked along with him, offering him his cordial gratulations, and giving him many wise and prudent counsels, though unfortunately, from the state of ignorance of Tony's mind, these latter were lamentably unprofitable. It was of "the Office" that he warned him—of its tempers, its caprices, its rancours, and its jealousies, till, lost in the maze of his confusion, poor Tony began to regard it as a beast of ill-omened and savage passions—a great monster, in fact, who lived on the bones and flesh of ardent and high-hearted youths, drying up the springs of their existence, and exhausting their brains out of mere malevolence. Out of all the farrago that he listened to, all that he could collect was, "that he was one of those fellows that the chiefs always hated and invariably crushed." Why destiny should have marked him out for such odium—why he was born to be strangled by red tape, Tony could not guess, nor, to say truth, did he trouble himself to inquire; but, resisting a pressing invitation to dine with Skeffington at his club, he hastened to his room to write his good news to his mother.

"Think of my good fortune, dearest little mother," he wrote. "I have got a place, and such a place! You'd fancy it was made for me, for I have neither to talk, nor to think, nor to read, nor to write—all my requirements are joints that will bear bumping, and a head that will stand the racket of railroad and steamboat without any sense of confusion, beyond what nature implanted there. Was he not a wise Minister who

named me to a post where bones are better than brains, and a good digestion superior to intellect? I am to be a messenger—a Foreign Service Messenger is the grand title—a creature to go over the whole globe with a white leather bag or two, full of mischief, or gossip, as it may be, and whose whole care is to consist in keeping his time, and being never out of health.

"They say in America the bears were made for Colonel Crocket's dog, and I'm sure these places were made for fellows of my stamp—fellows to carry a message, and yet not intrusted with the telling it.

"The pay is capital, the position good—that is, three-fourths of the men are as good or better than myself: and the life, all tell me, is rare fun—you go everywhere, see everything, and think of nothing. In all your dreams for me, you never fancied the like of this. They talk of places for all sorts of capacities, but imagine a berth for one of no capacity at all! And yet, mother dear, they have made a blunder—and a very absurd blunder too, and no small one!—they have instituted a test—a sort of examination—for a career that ought to be tested by a round with the boxing-gloves, or a sharp canter over a course with some four-feet hurdles!

"I am to be examined, in about six weeks from this, in some foreign tongues, multiplication, and the state of my muscles. I am to show proof that I was born of white parents, and am not too young or too old to go alone of a message. There's the whole of it. It ain't much, but it is quite enough to frighten one, and I go about with the verb *avoir* in my head, and the first four rules of arithmetic dance round me like so many furies. What a month of work and drudgery there is before *you*, little woman. You'll have to coach me through my declensions and subtractions. If you don't fag, you'll be plucked, for, as for me, I'll only be your representative whenever I go in. Look up your grammar then, and your history too, for they plucked a man the other day that said Piccolomini was not a general, but a little girl that sang in the *Traviata!* I'd start by the mail this evening, but that I have to go up to the Office—no end of a chilling place—for my examination-papers, and to be tested by the doctor that I am all right, thews and sinews; but I'll get away by the afternoon, right glad to leave all this turmoil and confusion, the very noise of which makes me quarrelsome and ill-tempered.

"There is such a good fellow here, Skeffington—the Honourable Skeffington Damer, to speak of him more formally—who has been most kind to me. He is private Secretary to Sir

Harry, and told me all manner of things about the Government offices, and the Dons that rule them. If I was a clever or a sharp fellow, I suppose this would have done me infinite service; but, as old Dr. Kinward says, it was only 'putting the wine in a cracked bottle;' and all I can remember is the kindness that dictated the attention.

"Skeff is some relation—I forget what—to old Mrs. Maxwell of Tilney, and, like all the world, expects to be her heir. He talks of coming over to see her when he gets his leave, and said —God forgive him for it—that he'd run down and pass a day with us. I couldn't say 'don't,' and I had not heart to say 'do!' I had not the courage to tell him frankly that we lived in a cabin with four rooms and a kitchen, and that butler, cook, footman, and housemaid, were all represented by a barefooted lassie, who was far more at home drawing a fishing-net than in cooking its contents. I was just snob enough to say, 'Tell us when we may look out for you;' and without manliness to add, 'And I'll run away when I hear it.' But he's a rare good fellow, and teazes me every day to dine with him at the Arthur —a club where all the young swells of the Government offices assemble to talk of themselves, and sneer at their official superiors.

"I'll go out, if I can, and see Dolly before I leave, though she told me that the family didn't like her having friends—the flunkeys called them followers—and of course, I ought not to do what would make her uncomfortable; still, one minute or two would suffice to get me some message to bring the doctor, who'll naturally expect it. I'd like, besides, to tell Dolly of my good fortune—though it is, perhaps, not a very graceful thing to be full of one's own success to another, whose position is so painful as hers, poor girl. If you saw how pale she has grown, and how thin; even her voice has lost that jolly ring it had, and is now weak and poor. She seems so much afraid—of what or whom I can't make out—but all about her bespeaks terror. You say very little of the Abbey, and I am always thinking of it. The great big world, and this great big city that is its capital, are very small things to *me*, compared to that little circle that could be swept by a compass, with a centre at the Burnside, and a leg of ten miles long, that would take in the Abbey and the salmon-weir, the rabbit-warren, and the boat-jetty! If I was very rich, I'd just add three rooms to our cottage, and put up one for myself, with my own traps; and another for you, with all the books that ever were written; and another for Skeff, or any other good fellow we'd like to have with us. Wouldn't that

be jolly, little mother? I won't deny I've seen what would be called prettier places here—the Thames above and below Richmond, for instance. Lawns smooth as velvet, great trees of centuries' growth, and fine houses of rich people, are on every side. But I like our own wild crags and breezy hill-sides better; I like the great green sea, rolling smoothly on, and smashing over our rugged rocks, better than all those smooth eddied currents, with their smart racing-boats skimming about. If I could only catch these fellows outside the Skerries some day, with a wind from the north-west: wouldn't I spoil the colours of their gay jackets?

"Here's Skeff come again. He says he is going to dine with some very pleasant fellows at the Star and Garter, and that I must positively come. He won't be denied, and I am in such rare spirits about my appointment, that I feel as if I should be a churl to myself to refuse, though I have my sore misgiving about accepting what I well know I never can make any return for. How I'd like one word from you to decide for me!

"I must shut up. I'm off to Richmond, and they are all making such a row and hurrying me so, that my head is turning. One has to hold the candle, and another stands ready with the sealing-wax, by way of expediting me. Good-bye, dearest mother—I start to-morrow for home.—Your affectionate son,—

"Tony Butler."

CHAPTER XIV.

A DINNER AT RICHMOND.

With the company that composed the dinner-party we have only a very passing concern. They were—including Skeffington and Tony—eight in all. Three were young officials from Downing Street; two were guardsmen; and one an inferior member of the royal household—a certain Mr. Arthur Mayfair, a young fellow much about town, and known by every one.

The dinner was ostensibly to celebrate the promotion of one of the guardsmen—Mr. Lyner; in reality, it was one of those small orgies of eating and drinking, which our modern civilization has imported from Paris.

A well-spread, and even splendid, table was no novelty to Tony; but such extravagance and luxury as this he had never witnessed before; it was, in fact, a banquet in which all that was rarest and most costly figured, and it actually seemed as if every land of Europe had contributed some delicacy or other to represent its claims to epicurism, at this congress. There were caviare from Russia, and oysters from Ostend, and red trout from the Highlands, and plover-eggs and pheasants from Bohemia, and partridges from Alsace, and scores of other delicacies, each attended by its appropriate wine; to discuss which, with all the high connoisseurship of the table, furnished the whole conversation. Politics and literature apart, no subject could have been more removed from all Tony's experiences. He had never read Brillat-Savarin, nor so much as heard of M. Ude —of the great controversy between the merits of white and brown truffles, he knew positively nothing; and he had actually eaten terrapin, and believed it to be very exquisite veal!

He listened, and listened very attentively. If it might have seemed to him that the company devoted a most extravagant portion of the time to the discussion, there was such a realism in the presence of the good things themselves, that the conversation never descended to frivolity; while there was an earnestness in the talkers that rejected such an imputation.

To hear them, one would have thought—at least, Tony

thought—that all their lives had been passed in dining. Could any memory retain the mass of small minute circumstances that they recorded, or did they keep prandial records as others keep game-books? Not one of them ever forgot where, and when, and how, he had ever eaten anything remarkable for its excellence: and there was an elevation of language, an ecstasy imported into the reminiscences, that only ceased to be ludicrous when he grew used to it. Perhaps, as a mere listener, he partook more freely than he otherwise might of the good things before him. In the excellence and endless variety of the wines, there was besides, temptation for cooler heads than his. Not to add, that on one or two occasions he found himself in a jury, empanelled to pronounce upon some nice question of flavour —points upon which, as the evening wore on, he entered with a far greater reliance on his judgment than he would have felt half an hour before dinner.

He had not what is called in the language of the table, a "made head." That is to say, at Lyle Abbey, his bottle of Sneyd's Claret after dinner was more than he liked well to drink; but now, when Sauterne succeeded Sherry, and Marcobrunner came after Champagne, and in succession followed Bordeaux, and Burgundy, and Madeira, and then Bordeaux again of a rarer and choicer vintage, Tony's head grew addled and confused. Though he spoke very little, there passed through his mind all the varied changes that his nature was susceptible of. He was gay and depressed, daring and cautious, quarrelsome and forgiving, stern and affectionate, by turns. There were moments when he would have laid down his life for the company, and fleeting instants when his eye glanced around to see upon whom he could fix a deadly quarrel; now he felt rather vainglorious at being one of such a distinguished company, and now a sharp distrust shot through him that he was there to be the butt of these town-bred wits, whose merriment was nothing but a covert impertinence.

All these changeful moods only served to make him drink more deeply. He filled bumpers and drank them daringly. Skeffington told the story of the threat to kick Willis—not much in itself, but full of interest to the young officials who knew Willis as an institution, and could no more have imagined his personal chastisement than an insult to the royal arms. When Skeff, however, finished by saying that the Secretary of State himself rather approved of the measure, they began to feel that Tony Butler was that greatest of all created things, "a rising man." For as the power of the unknown number is in-

commensurable, so the height to which a man's success may carry him can never be estimated.

"It's deuced hard to get one of these messenger-ships," said one of the guardsmen; "they say it's far easier to be named Secretary of Legation."

"Of course it is. Fifty fellows are able to ride in a coach for one that can read and write," said Mayfair.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Tony, his eyes flashing fire.

"Just what I said," replied the other, mildly—"that as there is no born mammal so helpless as a real gentleman, it's the rarest thing to find an empty shell to suit him."

"And they're well paid, too," broke in the soldier. "Why there's no fellow so well off. They have five pounds a-day."

"No they have not."

"They have."

"They have not."

"On duty. When they're on duty."

"No, nor off duty."

"Harris told me."

"Harris is a fool."

"He's my cousin," said a sickly young fellow, who looked deadly pale, "and I'll not hear him called a liar."

"Nobody said liar. I said he was a fool."

"And so he is," broke in Mayfair, "for he went and got married the other day to a girl without sixpence."

"Beaumont's daughter?"

"Exactly. The 'Lively Kitty,' as we used to call her; a name she'll scarce go by in a year or two."

"I don't think," said Tony, with a slow, deliberate utterance —"I don't think that he has made me a suit—suit—suitable apology for what he said—eh, Skeff?"

"Be quiet, will you?" muttered the other.

"Kitty had ten thousand pounds of her own."

"Not sixpence."

"I tell you she had."

"Grant it. What is ten thousand pounds?" lisped out a little pink-cheeked fellow, who had a hundred and eighty per annum at the Board of Trade. "If you are economical, you may get two years out of it."

"If I thought," growled out Tony into Skeff's ear, "that he meant it for insolence, I'd punch his head, curls and all."

"Will you just be quiet?" said Skeff again.

"I'd have married Kitty myself," said pink cheeks, "if I thought she had ten thousand."

"And I'd have gone on a visit to you," said Mayfair, "and we'd have played billiards, the French game, every evening."

"I never thought Harris was so weak as to go and marry," said the youngest of the party, not fully one-and-twenty.

"Every one hasn't your experience, Upton," said Mayfair.

"Why do the fellows bear all this?" whispered Tony again.

"I say, be quiet—do be quiet," mumbled Skeff.

"Who was it used to call Kitty Beaumont the Lass of Richmond Hill?" said Mayfair; and now another uproar ensued as to the authority in question, in which many contradictions were exchanged, and some wagers booked.

"Sing us that song Bailey made on her—'Fair Lady on the River's Bank;' you can sing it, Clinton?"

"Yes, let us have the song," cried several together.

"I'll wager five pounds I'll name a prettier girl on the same spot," said Tony to Skeff.

"Butler challenges the field," cried Skeff. "He knows, and will name, the prettiest girl in Richmond."

"I take him. What's the figure?" said Mayfair.

"And I—and I!" shouted three or four in a breath.

"I think he offered a pony," lisped out the youngest.

"I said, I'd bet five pounds," said Tony, fiercely; "don't misrepresent *me*, sir."

"I'll take your money, then," cried Mayfair.

"No, no; I was first; I said 'done' before you," interposed a guardsman.

"But how can it be decided? we can't summon the rival beauties to our presence, and perform Paris and the apple," said Skeff.

"Come along with me and you shall see her," broke in Tony; "she lives within less than five minutes' walk of where we are. I am satisfied that the matter should be left to your decision, Skeffington."

"No, no," cried several, together; "take Mayfair with you: he is the fittest man amongst us for such a criticism; he has studied these matters profoundly."

"Here's a health to all good lasses!" cried out another; and goblets were filled with champagne, and drained in a moment, while some attempted the song; and others, imagining that they had caught the air, started off with "Here's to the Maiden of Blooming Fifteen," making up an amount of confusion that was perfectly deafening, in which the waiter entered to observe

in a very meek tone, that the Archdeacon of Halford was entertaining a select party in the next room, and entreated that they might be permitted to hear each other occasionally.

Such a burst of horror and indignation as followed this request! some were for an armed intervention at once; some for a general smash of all things practicable; and two or three, haughtier in their drunkenness, declared that the Star and Garter should have no more of their patronage, and proudly ordered the waiter to fetch the bill.

"Thirty-seven—nine—six," said Mayfair, as he held the document near a candle; "make it an even forty for the waiters, and it leaves five pounds a-head, eh?—not too much after all."

"Well, I don't know; the asparagus was miserably small."

"And I got no strawberries."

"I have my doubts about that Moselle."

"It ain't dear: at least, it's not dearer than anywhere else."

While these criticisms were going forward, Tony perceived that each one in turn was throwing down his sovereigns on the table, as his contribution to the fund; and he approached Skeffington, to whisper that he had forgotten his purse,—his sole excuse to explain, what he wouldn't confess, that he believed he was an invited guest. Skeff was, however, by this time so completely overcome by the last toast, that he sat staring fatuously before him, and could only mutter, in a melancholy strain, "To be, or not to be; that's a question."

"Can you lend me some money?" whispered Tony. "I want your purse."

"He—takes my purse—trash—trash———" mumbled out the other.

"I'll book up for Skeffy," said one of the guardsmen; "and now it's all right."

"No," said Tony aloud; "I haven't paid; I left my purse behind; and I can't make Skeffington understand that I want a loan from him;" and he stooped down again and whispered in his ear.

While a buzz of voices assured Tony that "it didn't matter,—all had money, any one could pay," and so on, Skeffington gravely handed out his cigar-case, and said, "Take as much as you like old fellow; it was quarter-day last week."

In a wild uproarious burst of laughter they now broke up; some helping Skeffington along, some performing mock-ballet steps, and two or three attempting to walk with an air of rigid propriety, which occasionally diverged into strange tangents.

"With an admirable imitation of the prelude of a guitar, he began to sing."

Tony was completely bewildered. Never was a poor brain more addled than his. At one moment he thought them all the best fellows in the world; he'd have risked his neck for any of them; and at the next he regarded them as a set of insolent snobs, daring to show off airs of superiority to a stranger, because he was not one of them; and so he oscillated between the desire to show his affection for them, or have a quarrel with any of them.

Meanwhile, Mayfair, with a reasonable good voice and some taste, broke out into a wild sort of air, whose measure changed at every moment. One verse ran thus:—

"By the light of the moon, by the light of the moon,
We all went home by the light of the moon.
With a ringing song
We trampled along,
Recalling what we'll forget so soon,
How the wine was good,
And the talk was free.
And pleasant and gay the company.

"For the wine supplied
What our wits denied,
And we pledge the girls whose eyes we knew, whose eyes we knew.
You ask her name, but what's that to you, what's that to you?"

"Well, there's where she lives, anyhow," muttered Tony as he came to a dead stop on the road, and stared full at a small two-storeyed house in front of him.

"Ah, that's where she lives!" repeated Mayfair, as he drew his arm within Tony's and talked in a low and confidential tone. "And a sweet, pretty cottage it is. What a romantic little spot! What if we were to serenade her!"

Tony gave no reply. He stood looking up at the closed shutters of the quiet house, which, to his eyes, represented a sort of penitentiary for that poor imprisoned hard-working girl. His head was not very clear, but he had just sense enough to remember the respect he owed her condition, and how jealously he should guard her from the interference of others. Meanwhile, Mayfair had leaped over the low paling of the little front garden, and stood now close to the house. With an admirable imitation of the prelude of a guitar, he began to sing,

"Come dearest Lilla,
Thy anxious lover
Counts, counts the weary moments over"—

As he reached thus far, a shutter gently opened, and in the

strong glare of the moonlight, some trace of a head could be detected behind the curtain. Encouraged by this, the singer went on in a rich and flowery voice—

> "Anxious he waits,
> Thy voice to hear
> Break, break on his enraptured ear."

At this moment the window was thrown open, and a female voice, in an accent strongly Scotch, called out—"Awa wi' ye—pack o' ne'er do-weels as ye are—awa wi' ye a'! I'll call the police." But Mayfair went on—

> "The night invites to love,
> So tarry not above,
> But Lilla—Lilla—Lilla come down to me!"

"I'll come down to you, and right soon," shouted a hoarse masculine voice. Two or three who had clambered over the paling beside Mayfair now scampered off; and Mayfair himself, making a spring, cleared the fence, and ran down the road at the top of his speed, followed by all but Tony, who, half in indignation at their ignominious flight, and half with some vague purpose of apology, stood his ground before the gate.

The next moment the hall door opened, and a short thick-set man, armed with a powerful bludgeon, rushed out and made straight towards him. Seeing, however, that Tony stood firm, neither offering resistance, nor attempting escape, he stopped short, and cried out—"What for drunken blackguards are ye, that canna go home without disturbing a quiet neighbourhood?"

"If you can keep a civil tongue in your head," said Tony, "I'll ask your pardon for this disturbance."

"What's your apology to me, you young scamp?" cried the other, wrenching open the gate and passing out into the road. I'd rather give you a lesson than listen to your excuses." He lifted his stick as he spoke, but Tony sprang upon him with the speed of a tiger, and, wrenching the heavy bludgeon out of his hand, flung it far into a neighbouring field, and then, grasping him by the collar with both hands, he gave him such a shake as very soon convinced his antagonist how unequal the struggle would be between them. "By Heaven!" muttered Tony, "if you so much as lay a hand on me, I'll send you after your stick. Can't you see that this was only a drunken frolic, that these young fellows did not want to insult you, and if I stayed here behind them, it was to appease, not to offend you?"

"Dinna speak to me, sir. Let me go—let go my coat. I'm not to be handled in this manner," cried the other, in passion.

"Go back to your bed, then!" said, Tony, pushing him from him. "It's clear enough you have no gentleman's blood in your body, or you'd accept an amends, or resent an affront."

Stung by this retort, the other turned and aimed a blow at Butler's face; but he stopped it cleverly, and then, seizing him by the shoulder, he swung him violently round, and threw him within the gate of the garden.

"You are more angered than hurt," muttered Tony, as he looked at him for an instant.

"Oh, Tony, that this could be you!" cried a faint voice from a little window of an attic, and a violent sob closed the words.

Tony turned and went his way towards London, those accents ringing in his ears, and at every step he went repeating—"That this could be you!"

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE MEETING AND PARTING.

What a dreary waking was that of Tony's on the morning after the orgies. Not a whit the less overwhelming from the great difficulty he had in recalling the events, and investigating his own share in them. There was nothing that he could look back upon with pleasure. Of the dinner and the guests, all that he could remember was the costliness and the tumult; and of the scene at Mrs. M'Gruders, his impression was of insults given and received, a violent altercation, in which his own share could not be defended.

How different had been his waking thoughts, had he gone as he proposed, to bid Dora a good-bye, and tell her of his great good fortune! How full would his memory now have been of her kind words and wishes! how much would he have to recall of her sisterly affection! for they had been like brother and sister from their childhood. It was to Dora that Tony confided all his boyhood's sorrows, and to the same ear he had told his first tale of love, when the beautiful Alice Lyle had sent through his heart those emotions, which, whether of ecstasy or torture, make a new existence and a new being to him who feels them for the first time. He had loved Alice as a girl, and was all but heart-broken when she married. His sorrows—and were they not sorrows?—had all been intrusted to Dora, and from her he had heard such wise and kind counsels, such encouraging and hopeful words; and when the beautiful Alice came back, within a year, a widow, far more lovely than ever, he remembered how all his love was rekindled. Nor was it the less entrancing that it was mingled with a degree of deference for her station, and an amount of distance which her new position exacted.

He had intended to have passed his last evening with Dora in talking over these things—and how had he spent it? In a wild and disgraceful debauch, and in a company of which he felt himself well ashamed.

It was, however, no part of Tony's nature to spend time in vain regrets; he lived ever more in the present than the past.

There were a number of things to be done, and done at once. The first was to acquit his debt for that unlucky dinner; and in a tremor of doubt, he opened his little store to see what remained to him. Of the eleven pounds ten shillings his mother gave him he had spent less than two pounds; he had travelled third-class to London, and while in town denied himself every extravagance. He rang for his hotel bill, and was shocked to see that it came to three pounds seven-and-sixpence. He fancied he had half-starved himself, and he saw a catalogue of steaks and luncheons to his share, that smacked of very gluttony. He paid it without a word, gave an apology to the waiter, that he had run himself short of money, and could only offer him a crown. The dignified official accepted the excuse and the coin, with a smile of bland sorrow. It was a pity that cut both ways, for himself and for Tony too.

There now remained but a few shillings above five pounds, and he sat down and wrote this note :—

"My Dear Skeffington,

"Some one of your friends, last night, was kind enough to pay my share of the reckoning for me. Will you do me the favour to thank and repay him? I am off to Ireland hurriedly, or I'd call and see you. I have not even time to wait for those examination papers, which were to be delivered to me either to-day or to-morrow. Would you send them by post, addressed 'T. Butler, Burnside, Coleraine'? My head is not very clear to-day, but it should be more stupid if I could forget all your kindness since we met.

"Believe me, very sincerely, &c.,

"Tony Butler."

The next was to his mother :—

"Dearest Mother,

"Don't expect me on Saturday; it may be two or three days later ere I reach home. I am all right, in rare health and capital spirits, and never in my life felt more completely your own

"Tony Butler."

One more note remained, but it was not easy to write it, nor even to decide whether to address it to Dora or to Mr. M'Gruder. At length he decided for the latter, and wrote thus :—

"SIR,

"I beg to offer you the very humblest apology for the disturbance created last night before your house. We had all drunk too much wine, lost our heads, and forgotten good manners. If I had been in a fitting condition to express myself properly, I'd have made my excuses on the spot. As it is, I make the first use of my recovered brains to tell you how heartily ashamed I am of my conduct, and how desirous I feel to know that you will cherish no ungenerous feelings towards your faithful servant,

"T. BUTLER."

"I hope he'll think it all right. I hope this will satisfy him. I trust it is not too humble, though I mean to be humble. If he's a gentleman, he'll think no more of it; but he may not be a gentleman, and will probably fancy that, because I stoop, he ought to kick me. That would be a mistake; and perhaps it would be as well to add, by way of P.S.—'If the above is not fully satisfactory, and that you prefer another issue to this affair, my address is, T. Butler, Burnside, Coleraine, Ireland.'

"Perhaps that would spoil it all," thought Tony. "I want him to forgive an offence, and it's not the best way to that end to say, 'If you like fighting better, don't baulk your fancy.' No, no; I'll send it in its first shape. I don't feel very comfortable on my knees, it is true, but it is all my own fault if I am there.

"And now to reach home again. I wish I knew how that was to be done! Seven or eight shillings are not a very big sum, but I'd set off with them on foot, if there was no sea to be traversed." To these thoughts there was no relief by the possession of any article of value that he could sell or pledge. He had neither watch nor ring, nor any of those fanciful trinkets which modern fashion affects.

He knew not one person from whom he could ask the loan of a few pounds; nor, worse again, could he be certain of being able to repay them within a reasonable time. To approach Skeffington on such a theme was impossible; anything rather than this. If he were once at Liverpool, there were sure to be many captains of northern steamers that would know him, and give him a passage home. But how to get to Liverpool? The cheapest railroad fare was above a pound. If he must needs walk, it would take him a week, and he could not afford himself more than one meal a day, taking his chance to sleep under a corn-stack or a hedge-row. Very dear indeed was the price

that grand banquet cost him, and yet not dearer than half the extravagances men are daily and hourly committing—the only difference being, that the debt is not usually exacted so promptly. He wrote his name on a card, and gave it to the waiter, saying, "When I send to you under this name, you will give my portmanteau to the bearer of the message, for I shall probably not come back—at least for some time."

The waiter was struck by the words, but more still by the dejected look of one whom, but twenty-four hours back, he had been praising for his frank and gay bearing.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, sir?" asked the man, respectfully.

"Not a great deal," said Tony, with a faint smile.

"I was afraid, sir, from seeing you look pale this morning, I fancied, indeed, that there was something amiss. I hope you're not displeased at the liberty I took, sir?"

"Not a bit; indeed I feel grateful to you for noticing that I was not in good spirits. I have so very few friends in this big city of yours, your sympathy was pleasant to me. Will you remember what I said about my luggage?"

"Of course, sir, I'll attend to it; and if not called for within a reasonable time, is there any address you'd like me to send it to?"

Tony stared at the man, who seemed to flinch under the gaze, and it shot like a bolt through his mind, "he thinks I have some gloomy purpose in my head." "I believe I apprehend you," said he, laying his hand on the man's shoulder; "but you are all wrong. There is nothing more serious the matter with me, than to have run myself out of money, and I cannot conveniently wait here till I write and get an answer from home; there's the whole of it."

"Oh, sir, if you'll not be offended at a humble man like me—if you'd forgive the liberty I take, and let me as far as a ten-pound note;" he stammered and reddened, and seemed positively wretched in his attempt to explain himself without any breach of propriety. Nor was Tony indeed less moved as he said,—

"I thank you heartily; you have given me something to remember of this place with gratitude so long as I live. But I am not so hard pressed as you suspect. It is a merely momentary inconvenience, and a few days will set it all right. Good-bye; I hope we'll meet again."

And he shook the man's hand cordially in his own strong fingers, and passed out with a full heart and a very choking throat.

When he turned into the street, he walked along without choosing his way. His mind was too much occupied to let him notice either the way or the passers-by, and he sauntered along, now musing over his own lot, now falling back upon that trustful heart of the poor waiter, whose position could scarcely have inspired such confidence.

"I am certain that what are called moralists are unfair censors of their fellow men. I'll be sworn there is more of kindness, and generosity, and honest truth in the world, than there is of knavery and falsehood; but as we have no rewards for the one, and keep up jails and hulks for the other, we have nothing to guide our memories. That's the whole of it; all the statistics are on one side."

While he was thus ruminating, he had wandered along, and was already deep in the very heart of the City. Nor did the noise, the bustle, the overwhelming tide of humanity arouse him, as it swept along in its ceaseless flow. So intently was his mind turned inward, that he narrowly escaped being run over by an omnibus, the pole of which struck him, and under whose wheels he had unquestionably fallen, if it were not that a strong hand grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him powerfully back upon the flagway.

"Is it blind you are, that you didn't hear the 'bus?" cried a somewhat gruff voice, with an accent that told of a land he liked well; and Tony turned and saw a stout strongly-built young fellow, dressed in a sort of bluish frieze, and with a bundle on a stick over his shoulder. He was good-looking, but of a more serious cast of features than is common with the lower-class Irish.

"I see," said Tony, "that I owe this good turn to a countryman. You're from Ireland?"

"Indeed, and I am, your honour, and no lie in it," said he, reddening, as if—although there was nothing to be ashamed of by the avowal—popular prejudice lay rather in the other direction.

"I don't know what I was thinking of," said Tony again; and even yet his head had not regained its proper calm. "I forgot all about where I was, and never heard the horses till they were on me."

"'Tis what I remarked, sir," said the other, as with his sleeve he brushed the dirt off Tony's coat. "I saw you was like one in a dhream."

"I wish I had anything worth offering you," said Tony, reddening, while he placed the last few shillings he had in the other's palm.

"What's this for?" said the man, half angrily—"sure you don't think it's for money I did it;" and he pushed the coin back almost rudely from him.

While Tony assuaged, as well as he might, the anger of his wounded pride, they walked on together for some time, till at last the other said, "I'll have to hurry away now, your honour; I'm to be at Blackwall, to catch the packet for Derry, by twelve o'clock."

"What packet do you speak of?"

"The *Foyle*, sir. She's to sail this evening, and I have my passage paid for me, and I mustn't lose it."

"If I had my luggage, I'd go in her too. I want to cross over to Ireland."

"And where is it, sir—the luggage, I mean?"

"Oh, it's only a portmanteau, and it's at the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden."

"If your honour wouldn't mind taking charge of this," said he, pointing to his bundle, "I'd be off in a jiffy, and get the trunk, and be back by the time you reached the steamer."

"Would you really do me this service? Well, here's my card; when you show this to the waiter he'll hand you the portmanteau; and there is nothing to pay."

"All right, sir; the *Foyle*, a big paddle-steamer—you'll know her red chimney the moment you see it;" and without another word he gave Tony his bundle and hurried away.

"Is not this trustfulness?" thought Tony, as he walked onward; "I suppose this little bundle contains all this poor fellow's worldly store, and he commits it to a stranger, without one moment of doubt or hesitation." It was for the second time on that same morning, that his heart was touched by a trait of kindness; and he began to feel, that if such proofs of brotherhood were rife in the world, narrow fortune was not half so bad a thing as he had ever believed it.

It was a long walk he had before him, and not much time to do it in, so that he was obliged to step briskly out. As for the bundle, it is but fair to own, that at first he carried it with a certain shame and awkwardness, affecting in various ways to assure the passers-by that such an occupation was new to him; but as time wore on, and he saw, as he did see, that very few noticed him, and none troubled themselves as to what was the nature of his burden, he grew more indifferent, well consoled by thinking that nothing was more unlikely than that he should be met by any one he knew.

When he got down to the river-side, boats were leaving in

every direction, and one for the *Foyle*, with two passengers, offered itself at the moment. He jumped in, and soon found himself aboard a large mercantile boat, her deck covered with fragments of machinery and metal for some new factory in Belfast. "Where's the captain?" asked Tony, of a gruff-looking man in a tweed coat and a wideawake.

"I'm the captain; and what then?" said the other.

In a few words Tony explained that he had found himself short of cash, and not wishing to be detained till he could write and have an answer from home, he begged he might have a deck passage. "If it should cost more than I have money for, I will leave my trunk with your steward till I remit my debt."

"Get those boats aboard—clear away that hawser there—look out, or you'll foul that collier," cried the skipper, his deep voice ringing above the din and crash of the escaping steam, but never so much as noticing one word of Tony's speech.

Too proud to repeat his address, and yet doubting how it had been taken, he stood, occasionally buffeted about by the sailors as they hurried hither and thither; and now amidst the din, a great bell rang out, and while it clattered away, some scrambled up the side of the ship, and others clambered down, while with shouts and oaths and imprecations on every side, the great mass swung round, and two slow revolutions of her paddles showed she was ready to start. Almost frantic with anxiety for his missing friend, Tony mounted on a bulwark, and scanned every boat he could see.

"Back her!" screamed the skipper; "there, gently—all right. Go ahead;" and now with a shouldering, surging heave, the great black monster lazily moved forward, and gained the middle of the river. Boats were now hurrying wildly to this side and to that, but none towards the *Foyle*. "What will become of me? What will he think of me?" cried Tony; and he peered down into the yellow tide, almost doubtful if he ought not to jump into it.

"Go on," cried the skipper; and the speed increased, a long swell issuing from either paddle, and stretching away to either bank of the river. Far away in this rocking tide, tossing hopelessly and in vain, Tony saw a small boat wherein a man was standing wildly waving his handkerchief by way of signal.

"There he is, in one minute—give him one minute, and he will be here," cried Tony, not knowing to whom he spoke.

"You'll get jammed, my good fellow, if you don't come down from that," said a sailor. "You'll be caught in the davits when they swing round;" and seeing how inattentive he was to the caution, he laid a hand upon him and forced him upon deck. The ship had now turned a bend of the river, and as Tony turned aft to look for the boat, she was lost to him, and he saw her no more.

For some miles of the way, all were too much occupied to notice him. There was much to stow away and get in order, the cargo, having been taken in even to the latest moment before they started. There were some carriages and horses too, on board, neither of which met from the sailors more deferential care than they bestowed on cast-metal cranks and iron sleepers, thus occasioning little passages between those in charge and the crew, that were the reverse of amicable. It was in one of these Tony heard a voice he was long familiar with. It was Sir Arthur Lyle's coachman, who was even more overjoyed than Tony at the recognition. He had been sent over to fetch four carriage-horses and two open carriages for his master, and his adventures and mishaps were, in his own estimation, above all human experience.

"I'll have to borrow a five-pound note from you," said Tony; "I have come on board without anything—even my luggage is left behind."

"Five-and-twenty, Mr. Tony, if you want it. I'm as glad as fifty to see you here. You'll be able to make these fellows mind what I say. There's not as much as a spare tarpaulin to put over the beasts at night; and if the ship rocks, their legs will be knocked to pieces."

If Tony had not the same opinion of his influence, he did not however hesitate to offer his services, and assisted the coachman to pad the horse-boxes, and bandage the legs, with an overlaid covering of hay rope, against any accidents.

"Are you steerage or aft?" asked a surly-looking steward of Tony, as he was washing his hands after his exertions.

"There's a question to ask of one of the best blood in Ireland," interposed the coachman.

"The best blood in Ireland will then have to pay cabin fare," said the steward, as he jotted down a mem. in his book; and Tony was now easy enough in mind to laugh at the fellow's impertinence as he paid the money.

The voyage was not eventful in any way; the weather was fine, the sea not rough, and the days went by as monotonously as need be. If Tony had been given to reflection, he would

have had a glorious opportunity to indulge the taste, but it was the very least of all his tendencies.

He would indeed, have liked much to review his life, and map out something of his future road; but he could do nothing of this kind without a companion. Asking him to think for himself, and by himself, was pretty much like asking him to play chess or backgammon with himself, where it depended on his caprice which side was to be the winner. The habit of self-depreciation had, besides, got hold of him, and he employed it as an excuse to cover his inertness. "What's the use of my doing this, that, or t'other. I'll be a stupid dog to the end of the chapter. It's all waste of time to set me down to this or that. Other fellows could learn it—it's impossible for *me*."

It is strange how fond men will grow of pleading *in formâ pauperis* to their own hearts—even men constitutionally proud and high-spirited. Tony had fallen into this unlucky habit, and got at last to think it was his safest way in life to trust very little to his judgment.

"If I hadn't been 'mooning,' I'd not have walked under the pole of the omnibus, nor chanced upon this poor fellow, whose bundle I have carried away, nor lost my own kit, which, after all, was something to me." Worse than all these—infinitely worse—was the thought of how that poor peasant would think of him! "What a cruel lesson of mistrust and suspicion have I implanted in that honest heart! What a terrible revulsion must have come over him, when he found I had sailed away and left him!" Poor Tony's reasoning was not acute enough to satisfy him that the man could not accuse him for what was out of his power to prevent—the departure of the steamer; nor with Tony's own luggage in his possession, could he arraign his honesty, or distrust his honour.

He bethought him that he would consult Waters, for whose judgment in spavins, thoroughpins, capped hocks, and navicular lameness, he had the deepest veneration. Waters, who knew horses so thoroughly, must needs not be altogether ignorant of men.

"I say, Tom," cried he, "sit down here, and let me tell you something that's troubling me a good deal, and perhaps you can give me some advice on it." They sat down accordingly under the shelter of a horse-box, while Tony related circumstantially his late misadventure.

The old coachman heard him to the end without interruption. He smoked throughout the whole narrative, only now and then removing his pipe to intimate by an emphatic nod that the

"court was with the counsel." Indeed, he felt that there was something judicial in his position, and assumed a full share of importance on the strength of it.

"There's the whole case now before you," said Tony, as he finished—"what do you say to it?"

"Well, there an't a great deal to say to it, Mr. Tony," said he, slowly. "If the other chap has got the best kit, by course he has got the best end of the stick; and you may have an easy conscience about that. If there's any money or val'able in *his* bundle, it is just likely there will be some trace of his name, and where he lives too; so that, turn out either way, you're all right."

"So that you advise me to open his pack and see if I can find a clue to him."

"Well, indeed, I'd do that much out of cur'osity. At all events, you'll not get to know about him from the blue handkercher with the white spots."

Tony did not quite approve the counsel; he had his scruples, even in a good cause, about this investigation, and he walked the deck till far into the night, pondering over it. He tried to solve the case by speculating on what the countryman would have done with *his* pack. "He'll have doubtless tried to find out where I am to be met with or come at. He'll have ransacked my traps, and if so, there will be the less need of *my* investigating *his*. *He's* sure to trace *me*." This reasoning satisfied him so perfectly that he lay down at last to sleep with an easy conscience and so weary a brain that he slept profoundly. As he awoke, however, he found that Waters had already decided the point of conscience which had so troubled him, and was now sitting contemplating the contents of the peasant's bundle.

"There an't so much as a scrap o' writing, Mr. Tony; there an't even a prayer-book with his name in it—but there's a track to him for all that. I have him!" and he winked with that self-satisfied knowingness which had so often delighted him in the detection of a splint or a bone-spavin.

"You have him," repeated Tony. "Well, what of him?"

"He's a jailer, sir—yes, a jailer. I won't say he's the chief—he's maybe second or third—but he's one of 'em."

"How do you know that?"

"Here's how I found it out;" and he drew forth a blue cloth uniform, with yellow cuffs and collar, and a yellow seam down the trousers. There were no buttons on the coat, but both on the sleeve and the collar were embroidered two keys, crosswise. "Look at them, Master Tony; look at them, and say an't that

as clear as day? It's some new regulation, I suppose, to put them in uniform; and there's the keys, the mark of the lock-up, to show who he is that wears them."

Though the last man in the world to read riddles or unravel difficulties, Tony did not accept this information very willingly. In truth, he felt a repugnance to assign to the worthy country fellow a station which bears, in the appreciation of every Irishman, a certain stain. For, do as we will, reason how we may, the old estimate of the law as an oppression surges up through our thoughts, just as springs well up in an undrained soil.

"I'm certain you're wrong, Waters," said he, boldly; "he hadn't a bit the look of that about him: he was a fine, fresh-featured, determined sort of fellow, but without a trace of cunning or distrust in his face."

"I'll stand to it I'm right, Master Tony. What does keys mean? Answer me that. An't they to lock up? It must be to lock up something or somebody—you agree to that?"

Tony gave a sort of grunt, which the other took for concurrence, and continued.

"It's clear enough he an't the county treasurer," said he, with a mocking laugh—"nor he don't keep the Queen's private purse neither; no, sir. It's another sort of val'ables is under his charge. It's highwaymen and housebreakers, and felony chaps."

"Not a bit of it; he's no more a jailer than I'm a hangman. Besides, what is to prove that this uniform is his own? Why not be a friend's—a relation's? Would a fellow trained to the ways of a prison trust the first man he meets in the street, and hand him over his bundle? Is that like one whose daily life is passed among rogues and vagabonds?"

"That's exactly how it is," said Waters, closing one eye to look more piercingly astute. "Did you ever see anything trust another so much as a cat does a mouse? She hasn't no dirty suspicions at all, bnt lets him run here and run there, only with a make-believe of her paw letting him feel that he an't to trespass too far on her patience."

"Pshaw!" said Tony, turning away angrily; and he muttered to himself as he walked off, "how stupid it is to take any view of life from a fellow who has never looked at it from a higher point than a hayloft!"

As the steamer rounded Fairhead, and the tall cliffs of the Causeway came into view, other thoughts soon chased away all memory of the poor country fellow. It was home was now

before him—home, that no humility can rob of its hold upon the heart; home, that appeals to the poorest of us by the self-same sympathies the richest and greatest feel! Yes, yonder was Carrig-a-Rede, and there were the Skerries, so near and yet so far off. How slowly the great mass seemed to move, though it was about an hour ago she seemed to cleave the water like a fish. How unfair to stop her course at Larne to land those two or three passengers, and what tiresome leavetakings they indulge in; and the luggage, too, they'll never get it together! So thought Tony, his impatience mastering both reason and generosity.

"I'll have to take the horses on to Derry, Master Tony," said Waters, in an insinuating tone of voice, for he knew well what able assistance the other could lend him in any difficulty of the landing. "Sir Arthur thought that if the weather was fine we might be able to get them out on a raft and tow them into shore, but it's too rough for that."

"Far too rough," said Tony, his eyes straining to catch the well-known landmarks of the coast.

"And with blood-horses too, in top condition, there's more danger."

"Far more."

"So, I hope, your honour will tell the master that I didn't ask the captain to stop, for I saw it was no use."

"None whatever. I'll tell him—that is, if I see him," muttered Tony, below his breath.

"Maybe, if there was too much sea 'on' for your honour to land —— "

"What?" interrupted Tony, eyeing him sternly.

"I was saying, sir, that if your honour was forced to come on to Derry ——"

"How should I be forced?"

"By the heavy surf, no less," said Waters, peevishly, for he foresaw failure to his negotiation.

"The tide will be on the flood till eleven, and if they can't lower a boat I'll swim it, that's all. As to going on to Derry with you, Tom," added he, laughing, "I'd not do it if you were to give me your four thoroughbreds for it."

"Well, the wind's freshening, anyhow," grumbled Waters, not very sorry, perhaps, at the turn the weather was taking.

"It will be the rougher for you as you sail up the Lough," said Tony, as he lighted his cigar.

Waters pondered a good deal over what he could not but regard as a great change in character. This young man, so gay,

so easy, so careless—so ready to do anything, or do nothing—how earnest he had grown, and how resolute and how stern too. Was this a sign that the world was going well, or the reverse, with him? Here was a knotty problem, and one which, in some form or other, has ere now puzzled wiser heads than Waters's. For as the traveller threw off in the sunshine the cloak which he had gathered round him in the storm, prosperity will as often disclose the secrets of our hearts as that very poverty that has not wealth enough to buy a padlock for them.

"You want to land here, young man," said the captain to Tony; "and there's a shore-boat close alongside. Be alive, and jump in when she comes near."

"Good-bye, Tom," said Tony, shaking hands with him. "I'll report well of the beasts, and say also how kindly you treated me."

"You'll tell Sir Arthur that the rub on the off shoulder won't signify, sir; and that Emperor's hock is going down every day. And please to say, sir—for he'll mind *you* more than *me*— that there's nothing will keep beasts from kicking when a ship takes to rollin'; and that when the helpers got sea-sick, and couldn't keep on deck, if it hadn't been for yourself—— Oh, he's not minding a word I'm saying," muttered he, disconsolately; and certainly this was the truth, for Tony was now standing on a bulwark, with the end of a rope in his hand, slung whip fashion from the yard, to enable him to swing himself at an opportune moment into the boat, all the efforts of the rowers being directed to keep her from the steamer's side.

"Now's your time, my smart fellow," cried the Captain—"off with you!" And, as he spoke, Tony swung himself free with a bold spring, and, just as the boat rose on a wave, dropped neatly into her.

"Well done for a landsman!" cried the skipper; "port the helm, and keep away."

"You're forgetting the bundle, Master Tony," cried Waters, and he flung it towards him with all his strength; but it fell short, dropped into the sea, floated for about a second or so, and then sank for ever.

Tony uttered what was not exactly a blessing on his awkwardness, and, turning his back to the steamer, seized the tiller and steered for shore.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT THE ABBEY.

"WHO said that Tony Butler had come back?" said Sir Arthur, as they sat at breakfast on the day after his arrival.

"The gardener saw him last night, papa," said Mrs. Trafford; "he was sitting with his mother on the rocks below the cottage; and when Gregg saluted him, he called out, 'All well at the Abbey, I hope?'"

"It would have been more suitable if he had taken the trouble to assure himself of that fact by a visit here," said Lady Lyle. "Don't you think so, Mr. Maitland?"

"I am disposed to agree with you," said he, gravely.

"Besides," added Sir Arthur, "he must have come over in the *Foyle*, and ought to be able to bring me some news of my horses. Those two rough nights have made me very uneasy about them."

"Another reason for a little attention on his part," said her ladyship, bridling; and then, as if anxious to show that so insignificant a theme could not weigh on her thoughts, she asked her daughter when Mark and Isabella purposed coming home.

"They spoke of Saturday, mamma; but it seems now that Mrs. Maxwell has got up—or somebody has for her—an archery meeting for Tuesday, and she writes a most pressing entreaty for me to drive over, and, if possible, persuade Mr. Maitland to accompany me."

"Which I sincerely trust he will not think of."

"And why, dearest mamma?"

"Can you ask me, Alice? Have we not pushed Mr. Maitland's powers of patience far enough by our own dulness, without subjecting him to the stupidities of Tilney Park?—the dreariest old mansion of a dreary neighbourhood."

"But he might like it. As a matter of experimental research, he told us how he passed an autumn with the Mandans, and ate nothing but eels and wood-squirrels."

"You are forgetting the prairie rats, which are really delicacies."

"Nor did I include the charms of the fair Chachinhontas, who was the object of your then affections," said she, laughingly, but in a lower tone.

"So, then," said he, "Master Mark has been playing traitor, and divulging my confidence. The girl was a marvellous horsewoman, which is a rare gift with Indian women. I've seen her sit a drop-leap—I'll not venture to say the depth, but certainly more than the height of a man—with her arms extended wide, and the bridle loose and flowing."

"And you followed in the same fashion?" asked Alice, with a roguish twinkle of the eye.

"I see that Mark has betrayed me all through," said he, laughing. "I own I tried it, but not with the success that such ardour deserved. I came head-foremost to the ground before my horse."

"After all, Mr. Maitland, one is not obliged to ride like a savage," said Lady Lyle.

"Except when one aspires to the hand of a savage princess, mamma. Mr. Maitland was ambitious in those days."

"Very true," said he, with a deep sigh; "but it was the only time in my life in which I could say that I suffered my affection to be influenced by mere worldly advantages. She was a great heiress; she had a most powerful family connection."

"How absurd you are!" said Lady Lyle, good-humouredly.

"Let him explain himself, mamma; it is so very seldom he will condescend to let us learn any of his sentiments on any subject. Let us hear him about marriage."

"It is an institution I sincerely venerate. If I have not entered into the holy estate myself, it is simply from feeling I am not good enough. I stand without the temple, and only strain my eyes to catch a glimpse of the sanctuary."

"Does it appear to you so very awful and appalling, then?" said my lady.

"Certainly it does. All the efforts of our present civilization seem directed to that end. We surround it with whatever can inspire terror. We call in the Law as well as the Church —we add the Statutes to the Liturgy; and we close the whole with the most depressing of all festivities—a wedding-breakfast."

"And the Mandans, do they take a more cheerful view of matters?" asked Alice.

"'The girl was a marvellous horsewoman, which is a rare gift with Indian women."

TONY BUILER.

"How can you be so silly, Alice?" cried Lady Lyle.

"My dear mamma, are you forgetting what a marvellous opportunity we enjoy of learning the geography of an unknown sea, from one of the only voyagers who has ever traversed it?"

"Do you mean to go to Tilney, Alice?" asked her mother, curtly.

"If Mr. Maitland would like to add Mrs. Maxwell to his curiosities of acquaintance."

"I have met her already. I think her charming. She told me of some port, or a pair of coach-horses, I can't be certain which, her late husband purchased forty-two years ago; and she so mingled the subjects together, that I fancied the horses were growing yellow, and the wine actually frisky."

"I see that you *have* really listened to her," said Mrs. Trafford. "Well, do you consent to this visit?"

"Delighted. Tell me, by way of parenthesis, is she a near neighbour of the worthy Commodore with the charming daughters? Gambier Graham, I think his name is."

"Yes; she lives about twelve miles from his cottage: but why do you ask?"

"I have either promised; or he fancies I have promised, to pay him a flying visit."

"Another case of a savage princess," whispered Mrs. Trafford, and he laughed heartily at the conceit. "If we take the low road—it's very little longer and much prettier—we pass the cottage; and if your visit be not of great length—more than a morning call, in fact—I'll go there with you."

"You overwhelm me with obligations," said he, bowing low, to which she replied by a curtesy so profound as to throw an air of ridicule over his courtly politeness.

"Shall we say to-morrow for our departure, Mr. Maitland?"

"I am at your orders, madam."

"Well, then, I'll write to dear old Aunt Maxwell—I suppose she'll be your aunt too before you leave Tilney (for we all adopt a relation so very rich, and without an heir)—and delight her by saying that I have secured Mr. Maitland, an announcement which will create a flutter in the neighbourhood by no means conducive to good archery."

"Tell her we only give him up till Wednesday," said Lady Lyle, "for I hope to have the Crayshaws here by that time, and I shall need you all back to receive them."

"More beauties, Mr. Maitland," exclaimed Mrs. Trafford "What are you looking so grave about?"

"I was thinking it was just possible that I might be called

away suddenly, and that there are some letters I ought to write; and, last of all, whether I shouldn't go and make a hurried visit to Mrs. Butler; for in talking over old friends in Scotland, we have grown already intimate."

"What a mysterious face for such small concerns!" said Mrs. Trafford. "Didn't you say something, papa, about driving me over to look at the two-year-olds?"

"Yes; I am going to inspect the paddock, and told Giles to meet me there."

"What's the use of our going without Tony?" said she, disconsolately; "he's the only one of us knows anything about a colt."

"I really did hope you were beginning to learn that this young gentleman was not an essential of our daily life here," said Lady Lyle, haughtily. "I am sorry that I should have deceived myself."

"My dear mamma, please to remember your own ponies that have become undrivable, and Selim, that can't even be saddled. Greg will tell you that he doesn't know what has come over the melon-bed—the plants look all scorched and withered; and it was only yesterday papa said that he'd have the schooner drawn up till Tony came back to decide on the new keel and the balloon jib!"

"What a picture of us to present to Mr. Maitland! but I trust, sir, that you know something of my daughter's talent for exaggerated description by this time, and you will not set us down for the incapables she would exhibit us." Lady Lyle moved haughtily away as she spoke, and Sir Arthur, drawing Mrs. Trafford's arm within his own, said, "You're in a fighting mood to-day. Come over and torment Giles."

"There's nothing I like better," said she. "Let me go for my hat and a shawl."

"And I'm off to my letter-writing," said Maitland.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE COTTAGE.

What a calm, still, mellow evening it was, as Tony sat with his mother in the doorway of the cottage, their hands clasped, and in silence, each very full of thought indeed, but still fuller of that sweet luxury, the sense of being together after an absence—the feeling that home was once more home, in all that can make it a centre of love and affection.

"I began to think you weren't coming back at all, Tony," said she, "when first you said Tuesday, and then it was Friday, and then it came to be the middle of another week. 'Ah, me!' said I to the doctor, 'he'll not like the little cottage down amongst the tall ferns and the heather, after all that grand town and its fine people.'"

"If you knew how glad I am to be back here," said he, with a something like choking about the throat—"if you knew what a different happiness I feel under this old porch, and with you beside me!"

"My dear, dear Tony, let us hope we are to have many such evenings as this together. Let me now hear all about your journey, for as yet you have only told me about that good-hearted country fellow whose bundle has been lost. Begin at the beginning, and try and remember everything."

"Here goes, then, for a regular report. See, mother, you'd not believe it of me, but I jotted all down in a memorandum-book, so that there's no trusting to bad memory—all's in black and white."

"That *was* prudent, Tony. I'm really glad that you have such forethought. Let me see it."

"No, no. It's clean and clear beyond your reading. I shall be lucky enough if I can decipher it myself. Here we begin: 'Albion, Liverpool. Capital breakfast, but dear. Wanted change for my crown-piece, but chaffed out of it by pretty bar-maid, who said'—Oh, that's all stuff and nonsense," said he, reddening. "'Mail-train to London: not allowed to smoke first-class; travelled third, and had my 'baccy.' I needn't read all this balderdash, mother; I'll go on to business matters.

'Skeffy, a trump, told me where he buys "birdseye" for one and nine the pound; and, mixed with cavendish, it makes grand smoking. Skeffy says he'll get me the first thing vacant.'"

"Who is Skeffy? I never heard of him before."

"Of course you've heard. He's private secretary to Sir Harry, and gives away all the Office patronage. I don't think he's five feet five high, but he's made like a Hercules. Tom Sayers says Skeffy's deltoid—that's the muscle up here—is finer than any in the ring, and he's such an active devil. I must tell you of the day I held up the *Times* for him to jump through; but I see you are impatient for the serious things—well, now for it.

"Sir Harry, cruel enough, in a grand sort of overbearing way, told me my father was called Watty. I don't believe it; at least the fellow who took the liberty must have earned the right by a long apprenticeship."

"You are right there, Tony; there were not many would venture on it."

"Did any one ever call him Wat Tartar, mother?"

"If they had, they'd have caught one, Tony, I promise you."

"I thought so. Well, he went on to say that he had nothing he could give me. It was to the purport that I was fit for nothing, and I agreed with him."

"That was not just prudent, Tony; the world is prone enough to disparage without helping them to the road to it."

"Possibly—but he read me like a book, and said that I only came to him because I was hopeless. He asked me if I knew a score of things he was well aware that I must be ignorant of, and groaned every time I said 'no!' When he said, 'go home and brush up your French and Italian,' I felt as if he said, 'look over your rent roll, and thin your young timber.' He's a humbug, mother."

"Oh, Tony, you must not say that."

"I will say it; he's a humbug, and so is the other."

"Who is the other you speak of?"

"Lord Ledgerton, a smartish old fellow, with a pair of grey eyes that look through you, and a mouth that you can't guess whether he's going to eat you up or to quiz you. It was he that said, 'Make Butler a messenger.' They didn't like it. The Office fellows looked as sulky as night; but they had to bow and snigger, and say, 'certainly, my Lord;' but I know what they intend, for all that. They mean to pluck me; that's the way they'll do it; for when I said I was nothing to boast of

in English, and something worse in French, they grinned and exchanged smiles, as much as to say, 'there's a rasper he'll never get over.'"

"And what is a messenger, Tony?"

"He's a fellow that carries the despatches over the whole world—at least wherever there is civilization enough to have a Minister or an Envoy. He starts off from Downing Street with half-a-dozen great bags as tall as me, and he drops one at Paris, another at Munich, another at Turin, and perhaps the next at Timbuctoo. He goes full speed—regular steeple-chase pace—and punches the head of the first postmaster that delays him; and as he is well paid, and has nothing to think of but the road, the life isn't such a bad one."

"And does it lead to anything—is there any promotion from it?"

"Not that I know, except to a pension; but who wants anything better? Who asks for a jollier life than rattling over Europe in all directions at the Queen's expense? Once on a time they were all snobs, or the same thing; now they are regular swells, who dine with the Minister, and walk into the attachés at billiards or blind hookey; for the dons saw it was a grand thing to keep the line for younger sons, and have a career where learning might be left out, and brains were only a burden!"

"I never heard of such a line of life," said she, gravely.

"I had it from the fellows themselves. There were five of them in the waiting-room, tossing for sovereigns, and cursing the first clerk, whoever he is; and they told me they'd not change with the first secretaries of any legation in Europe. But who is this, mother, that I see coming down the hill?—he's no acquaintance of ours, I think?"

"Oh, it's Mr. Maitland, Tony," said she, in some confusion; for she was not always sure in what temper Tony would receive a stranger.

"And who may Mr. Maitland be?"

"A very charming and a very kind person too, whose acquaintance I made since you left this; he brought me books and flowers, and some geranium slips; and, better than all, his own genial company."

"He's not much of a sportsman, I see—that short gun he carries is more like a walking-stick than a fowling-piece." And Tony turned his gaze seaward, as though the stranger was not worth a further scrutiny.

"They told me I should find you here, madam," said Mait-

land, as he came forward, with his hat raised, and a pleasant smile on his face.

"My son, sir," said the old lady, proudly—"my son Tony, of whom I have talked to you."

"I shall be charmed if Mr. Butler will allow me to take that place in his acquaintance which a sincere interest in him gives me some claim to," said Maitland, approaching Tony, intending to shake his hand, but too cautious to risk a repulse, if it should be meditated.

Tony drew himself up haughtily, and said, "I am much honoured, sir; but I don't see any reason for such an interest in me."

"Oh, Tony," broke in the widow; but Maitland interrupted and said, "It's easy enough to explain. Your mother and myself have grown, in talking over a number of common friends, to fancy that we knew each other long ago. It was, I assure you, a very fascinating delusion for me. I learned to recall some of the most cherished of my early friends, and remember traits in them which had been the delight of my childhood. Pray forgive me, then, if in such a company your figure got mixed up, and I thought or fancied that I knew you."

There was a rapid eagerness in the manner he said these words that seemed to vouch for their sincerity, but their only immediate effect was to make Tony very ill at ease and awkward.

"Mr. Maitland has not told you, as he might have told you, Tony, that he came here with the offer of a substantial service. He had heard that you were in search of some pursuit or occupation."

"Pray, madam, I entreat of you to say nothing of this now; wait, at least, until Mr. Butler and I shall know more of each other."

"A strange sort of a piece you have there," said Tony, in his confusion, for his cheek was scarlet with shame—"something between an old duelling-pistol and a carbine."

"It's a short Tyrol rifle, a peasant's weapon. It's not a very comely piece of ordnance, but it is very true and easy to carry. I bought it from an old chamois-hunter at Maltz: and I carried it with me this morning with the hope that you would accept it."

"Oh, I couldn't think of it; I beg you to excuse me. I'm much obliged; in fact, I never do—never did—take a present."

"That's true, sir. Tony and I bear our narrow means only because there's a sort of rugged independence in our natures that save us from craving for whatever we can do without."

"A pretty wide catalogue too, I assure you," said Tony, laughing, and at once recovering his wonted good-humour. "We have made what the officials call the extraordinaries fill a very small column. There!" cried he, suddenly, "is the sea-gull on that point of rock yonder out of range for your rifle."

"Nothing near it. Will you try?" asked Maitland, offering the gun.

"I'd rather see you."

"I'm something out of practice latterly. I have been leading a town life," said Maitland, as he drew a small eye-glass from his pocket and fixed it in his eye. "Is it that fellow there you mean? There's a far better shot to the left, that large diver that is sitting so calmly on the rolling sea. There he is again."

"He's gone now—he has dived," said Tony, "there's nothing harder to hit than one of these birds—what between the motion of the sea and their own wariness. Some people say that they scent gunpowder."

"That fellow shall!" said Maitland, as he fired; for just as the bird emerged from the depth, he sighted him, and with one flutter the creature fell dead on the wave.

"A splendid shot—I never saw a finer!" cried Tony, in ecstasy, and with a look of honest admiration at the marksman. "I'd have bet ten—ay, twenty—to one you'd have missed. I'm not sure I'd not wager against your doing the same trick again."

"You'd lose your money, then," said Maitland; "at least, if I was rogue enough to take you up."

"You must be one of the best shots in Europe, then!"

"No; they call me second in the Tyrol. Hans Godrel is the first. We have had many matches together, and he has always beaten me."

The presence of a royal prince would not have inspired Tony with the same amount of respect as these few words, uttered negligently and carelessly; and he measured the speaker from head to foot, recognizing for the first time his lithe and well-knit, well-proportioned figure.

"I'll be bound you are a horseman, too?" cried Tony.

"If you hadn't praised my shooting, I'd tell you that I ride better than I shoot."

"How I'd like to have a brush across country with you!" exclaimed Tony, warmly.

"What easier?—what so easy? Our friend Sir Arthur has

an excellent stable; at least, there is more than one mount for men of our weight. I suspect Mark Lyle will not join us; but we'll arrange a match—a sort of home steeple-chase."

"I'd like it well," broke in Tony, "but I have no horses of my own, and I'll not ride Sir Arthur's."

"This same independence of ours has a something about it that won't let us seem very amiable, Mr. Maitland," said the old lady, smiling.

"Pardon me, madam; it has an especial attraction for *me*. I have all my life long been a disciple of that school; but I must say that in the present case it is not applicable. I have been for the last couple of weeks a guest at Lyle Abbey, and if I were asked whose name came most often uppermost, and always in terms of praise, I should say—your son's."

"I have met with great kindness from Sir Arthur and his family," said Tony, half sternly, half sorrowfully. "I am not likely ever to forget it."

"You have not seen them since your return, I think?" said Maitland, carelessly.

"No, sir," broke in the old lady; "my son has been so full of his travels, and all the great people he met, that we have not got through more than half of his adventures. Indeed, when you came up he was just telling me of an audience he had with a Cabinet Minister——"

"Pooh, pooh, mother! Don't bore Mr. Maitland with these personal details."

"I know it is the privilege of friendship to listen to these," said Maitland, "and I am sincerely sorry that I have not such a claim."

"Well, sir, you ought to have that claim, were it only in consideration of your own kind offer to Tony."

"Oh, pray, madam, do not speak of it," said Maitland, with something nearer confusion than so self-possessed a gentleman was likely to exhibit. "When I spoke of such a project, I was in utter ignorance that Mr. Butler was as much a man of the world as myself, and far and away beyond the reach of any guidance of mine."

"What then were your intentions regarding me?" asked Tony in some curiosity.

"I entreat of you, madam," said Maitland, eagerly, "to forget all that we said on that subject."

"I cannot be so ungrateful, sir. It is but fair and just that Tony should hear of your generous plan. Mr. Maitland thought

he'd just take you abroad—to travel with him—to go about and see the world. He'd call you his secretary."

"His what!" exclaimed Tony, with a burst of laughter. "His what? mother?"

"Let *me* try and explain away, if I can, the presumption of such a project. Not now, however," said Maitland, looking at his watch, "for I have already overstayed my time; and I have an appointment for this evening—without you will kindly give me your company for half a mile up the road, and we can talk the matter over together."

Tony looked hesitatingly for a moment at his mother, but she said, "To be sure, Tony. I'll give Mr. Maitland a loan of you for half an hour. Go with him, by all means."

With all that courtesy of which he was a master, Maitland thanked her for the sacrifice she was making, and took his leave.

"You have no objection to walk fast, I hope," said Maitland; "for I find I am a little behind my time."

Tony assented with a nod, and they stepped out briskly—the device of the speed being merely assumed to give Maitland an opportunity of seeing a little more of his companion before entering upon any serious converse. Tony, however, was as impenetrable in his simplicity as some others are in their depth; and after two or three attempts to draw him on to talk of commonplaces, Maitland said abruptly, "You must have thought it a great impertinence on my part to make such a proposal to your mother as she has just told you of; but the fact was, I had no other way of approaching a very difficult subject, and opening a question which to her, certainly, I could not explain myself fully upon. I heard a good deal about you up at the Abbey, and all that I heard confirmed me in the notion that you were just the man for an enterprise in which I am myself deeply interested. However, as I well knew, even if I succeded in inducing you to become my comrade, it would be necessary to have a sort of narrative which would conceal the project from your mother, it occurred to me to get up this silly idea of a secretaryship, which I own freely may have offended you."

"Not offended; it only amused me," said Tony, good-humouredly. "I can't imagine a man less fitted for such an office than myself."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Maitland, "though I'm quite certain it would be a very unprofitable use to make of you. You are, like myself, a man of action—one to execute and do,

and not merely to note and record. The fellows who write history very seldom make it; isn't that true?"

"I don't know. I can only say I don't think I'm very likely to do one or the other."

"We shall see that. I don't concur in the opinion, but we shall see. It would be rather a tedious process to explain myself fully as to my project, but I'll give you two or three little volumes."

"No, no; don't give me anything to read; if you want me to understand you, tell it out plainly, whatever it is."

"Here goes then, and it is not my fault if you don't fully comprehend me; but mind, what I am about to reveal to you is strictly on honour, and never to be divulged to any one. I have your word for this?" They pressed hands, and he continued. "There is a government on the Continent so undermined by secret treachery that it can no longer rely upon its own arms for defence, but is driven to enlist in its cause the brave and adventurous spirits of other countries—men who, averse to ignoble callings or monotonous labour, would rather risk life than reduce it to the mere condition of daily drudgery. To this government, which in principle has all my sympathies, I have devoted all that I have of fortune, hope, or personal energy. I have, in a word, thrown my whole future into its cause. I have its confidence in return; and I am enabled not only to offer a high career and a noble sphere of action, but all that the world calls great rewards, to those whom I may select to join me in its defence."

"Is it France?" asked Tony; and Maitland had to bite his lip to repress a smile at such a question.

"No, it is not France," said he, calmly; "for France, under any rule, I'd not shed one drop of my blood."

"Nor I neither!" cried Tony. "I hate Frenchmen; my father hated them, and taught me to do the same."

"So far from enlisting you to serve France, it is more than probable that in the cause I speak of you'll find yourself arrayed against Frenchmen."

"All right; I'd do that with a heart and a half; but what is the State? Is it Austria?—is it Russia?"

"Neither. If you only give me to believe that you listen favourably to my plan you shall hear everything; and I'll tell you, besides, what I shall offer to you personally—the command of a company in an Irish regiment, with the certainty of rapid advancement, and ample means to supply yourself with all that your position requires. Is that sufficient?"

"Quite so, if I like the cause I'm to fight for."

"I'll engage to satisfy you on that head. You need but read the names of those of our own countrymen who adopt it, to be convinced that it is a high and a holy cause. I don't suppose you have studied very deeply that great issue which our century is about to try—the cause of order *versus* anarchy—the right to rule of the good, the virtuous, and the enlightened, against the tyranny of the unlettered, the degraded, and the base."

"I know nothing about it."

"Well, I'll tax your patience some day to listen to it all from me; for the present what say you to my plan?"

"I rather like it. If it had only come last week, I don't think I could have refused it."

"And why last week?"

"Because I have got a promise of an appointment since that."

"Of what nature—a commission in the army?"

"No," said he, shaking his head.

"They're not going to make a clerk of a fellow like you, I trust?"

"They'd be sorely disappointed if they did."

"Well, what *are* they going to do with you?"

"Oh, it's nothing very high and mighty. I am to be what they call a Queen's Messenger."

"Under the Foreign Office?"

"Yes."

"Not bad things these appointments—that is to say, gentleman hold them, and contrive to live on them. How they do so it's not very easy to say; but the fact is there, and not to be questioned."

This speech, a random shot as it was, hit the mark, and Maitland saw that Tony winced under it, and he went on.

"The worst is, however, that these things lead to nothing. If a man takes to the law, he dreams of the Great Seal, or at least of the bench. If he be a soldier, he is sure to scribble his name with lieutenant-general before it. One always has an eye to the upper branches, whatever be the tree; but this messenger affair is a mere bush, which does not admit of climbing. Last of all, it would never do for you."

"And why not do for me?" asked Tony, half fiercely.

"Simply because you could not reduce yourself to the mere level of a piece of mechanism—a thing wound up at Downing Street, to go 'down' as it reached Vienna. To you life should present, with its changes of fortune, its variety, its adventures,

and its rewards. Men like you confront dangers, but are always conquered by mere drudgery. Am I right?"

"Perhaps there is something in that."

"Don't fancy that I am talking at hazard; I have myself felt the very thing I am telling you of; and I could no more have begun life as a Cabinet postboy, than I could have taken to stone-breaking."

"You seem to forget that there is a class of people in this world whom a wise proverb declares are not to be choosers."

"There never was a sillier adage. It assumes that because a man is poor he must remain poor. It presumes to affirm that no one can alter his condition. And who are the successful in life? The men who have energy to will it—the fellows who choose their place, and insist upon taking it. Let me assure you, Butler, you are one of these, if you could only throw off your humility and believe it. Only resolve to join us, and I'll give you any odds you like that I am a true prophet; at all events turn it over in your mind—give it a fair consideration; of course, I mean your own consideration, for it is one of those things a man cannot consult his mother upon; and when we meet again, which will not be for a few days, as I leave for a short absence to-morrow, you'll give me your answer."

"What day do you expect to be back here?"

"I hope by Saturday; indeed, I can safely say by Saturday."

"By that time I shall have made up my mind. Good-bye."

"The mind is made up already," muttered Maitland, as he moved away—"I have him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ROAD.

A GREAT moralist and a profound thinker has left it on record that there were few pleasanter sensations than those of being whirled rapidly along a good road at the top speed of a pair of posters. Whether, had he lived in our age of express trains, the "rail" might not have qualified the judgment, is not so sure. One thing is, however, certain—the charm of a brisk drive on a fine breezy morning, along a bold coast, with a very beautiful woman for a companion, is one that belongs to all eras, independent of broad gauges and narrow, and deriving none of its enjoyment from steam or science.

Maitland was to know this now in all its ecstasy, as he drove off from Lyle Abbey with Mrs. Trafford. There was something of gala in the equipage—the four dappled greys with pink roses at their heads, the smartly-dressed servants, and more than all, the lovely widow herself, most becomingly dressed in a costume which, by favour of the climate, could combine furs with lace—that forcibly struck him as resembling the accompaniments of a wedding; and he smiled at the pleasant conceit.

"What is it amuses you, Mr. Maitland?" said she, unable to repress her curiosity.

"I am afraid to tell you—that is, I might have told you a moment ago, but I can't now."

"Perhaps I guess it?"

"I don't think so."

"No matter; let us talk of something else. Isn't that a very beautiful little bay? It was a fancy of mine once to build a cottage there. You can see the spot from here, to the left of those three rocks."

"Yes; but there are walls there—ruins, I think."

"No, not exactly ruins. They were the outer walls of my intended villa, which I abandoned after I had begun it; and there they stand; accusers of a change of mind, sad reminders of other days and their projects."

"Were they very pleasant days that you sigh over them, or are they sad reminiscences?"

"Both one and the other. I thought it would be such a nice thing to retire from the world and all its vanities, and live there very secluded and forgotten."

"And how long ago was this?"

"Oh, very long ago—fully a year and a half."

"Indeed!" cried he, with a well-feigned astonishment.

"Yes," said she, resuming. "I was very tired of being flattered and fêted, and what people call 'spoiled;' for it is by no means remembered how much amusement is afforded to those who play the part of 'spoilers' in the wilfulness and caprice they excite; and so I thought, 'I'll show you all how very easy it is to live without you. I'll let you see that I can exist without your homage.'"

"And you really fancied this?"

"You ask as if you thought the thing incredible."

"Only difficult—not impossible."

"I never intended total isolation, mind. I'd have had my intimates, say two or three—certainly not more—dear friends, to come and go and stay as they pleased."

"And do you know how you'd have passed your time, or shall I tell you?"

"Yes. Let me hear your version of it."

"In talking incessantly of that very world you had quitted, in greedily devouring all its scandals, and canvassing all its sins—criticizing, very possibly, its shortcomings and condemning its frivolities; but still following with a wistful eye all its doings, and secretly longing to be in the thick of them."

"Oh, how wrong you are, how totally wrong! You know very little about him who would have been my chief adviser and Grand Vizier."

"And who, pray, would have been so fortunate as to fill that post?"

"The son of that old lady to whom you devoted so many mornings—the playfellow of long ago, Tony Butler."

"Indeed, I only made his acquaintance yesterday, and it would be rash to speak on such a short experience, but I may be permitted to ask, has he that store of resources which enliven solitude? is he so full of life's experiences that he can afford to retire from the world and live on the interest of his knowledge of mankind?"

"He knows nothing whatever of what is called life—at least

what Mr. Maitland would call life. He is the most simple-hearted young fellow in the world, with the finest nature, and the most generous."

"What would I not give for a friend who would grow so enthusiastic about me!"

"Are you so sure you'd deserve it?"

"If I did, there would be no merit in the praise. Credit means trust for what one may or may not have."

"Well, I am speaking of Tony as I know him; and, true to the adage, there he is, coming down the hill. Pull up, George."

"Mr. Butler's making me a sign, ma'am, not to stop till I reach the top of the hill."

The moment after, the spanking team stood champing their bits and tossing their manes on the crest of the ridge.

"Come here, Tony, and be scolded!" cried Mrs. Trafford; while the young fellow, instead of approaching the carriage, busied himself about the horses.

"Wait a moment till I let down their heads. How could you have suffered them to come up the long hill with the bearing-reins on, Alice?" cried he.

"So, then, it is I that am to have the scolding," said she, in a whisper; then added aloud, "come here and beg pardon. I'm not sure you'll get it, for your shameful desertion of us. Where have you been, sir? and why have not you reported yourself on your return?"

Tony came up to the side of the carriage with an attempt at swagger that only increased his own confusion, and made him blush deeply. No sooner, however, had he seen Maitland, of whose presence up to that he had been ignorant, than he grew pale, and had to steady himself by catching hold of the door.

"I see you are ashamed," said she, "but I'll keep you over for sentence. Meanwhile, let me present you to Mr. Maitland."

"I know him," said Tony, gulping out the words.

"Yes," chimed in Maitland, "we made acquaintance yesterday; and if Mr. Butler be but of my mind, it will not be a mere passing knowledge we shall have of each other."

"Get in, Tony, and come a mile or two with us. You know all the short cuts in the mountains, and can get back easily."

"There's the short cut I mean to take now," said Tony, sternly, as he pointed to a path that led down to the sea-shore. "I am going home."

"Yes, sir," resumed she, with a well-feigned air of severity—"but mine is a command."

"I have left the service—I have taken my discharge," said he, with a forced laugh.

"At least, you ought to quit with honour—not as a deserter," said she, softly, but sadly.

"Perhaps he could not trust his resolution, if he were to see again the old flag he had served under," said Maitland.

"Who made you the exponent of what I felt, sir?" said he, savagely—"I don't remember that in our one single conversation we touched on these things."

"Tony!" cried Alice, in a low voice, full of deep feeling and sorrow—"Tony!"

"Good-bye, Alice; I'm sorry to have detained you, but I thought—I don't know what I thought. Remember me to Bella—good-bye!" He turned away—then suddenly, as if remembering himself, wheeled round and said, "Good-morning, sir," with a short quick nod of his head. The moment after he had sprung over the low wall at the road-side, and was soon lost to view in the tall ferns.

"How changed he is! I declare I can scarcely recognize him," said Mrs. Trafford, as they resumed their journey. "He used to be the gentlest, easiest, and softest of all natures. Never put out—never crossed by anything."

"And so I've no doubt you'd have found him to-day if I had not been here."

"What do you mean?"

"Surely you remarked the sudden change that came over his face when he saw me. He thought you were alone. At all events, he never speculated on finding me at your side."

"Indeed!" said she, with an air of half-offended pride; "and are you reputed to be such a very dangerous person, that to drive out with you should inspire all this terror?"

"I don't believe I am," said Maitland, laughing; "but perhaps your rustic friend might be pardoned if he thought so."

"How very subtle that is! Even in your humility you contrive to shoot a bolt at poor Tony."

"And why poor? Is he poor who is so rich in defenders? Is it a sign of poverty when a man can afford to dispense with all the restraints that attach to others, and say and do what he likes, with the certainty that it will all be submitted to? I call that wealth unbounded—at least, it is the one prize that money confers; and if one can have it without the dross, I'd say, Give me the privilege and keep the title-deeds."

"Mr. Maitland," said she, gravely, "Tony Butler is not in the least like what you would represent him. In my life I never knew any one so full of consideration for others."

"Go on," said he, laughing. "It's only another gold mine of his you are displaying before me. Has he any other gifts or graces?"

"He has a store of good qualities, Mr. Maitland; they are not, perhaps, very showy ones."

"Like those of some other of our acquaintance," added he, as if finishing her speech for her. "My dear Mrs. Trafford, I would not disparage your early friend—your once playfellow—for the world. Indeed, I feel, if life could be like a half-holiday from school, he'd be an admirable companion to pass it with: the misfortune is, that these men must take their places in the common tournament with the rest of us, and then they are not so certain of making a distinguished figure as when seen in the old playground with bat and ball and wicket."

"You mean that such a man as Tony Butler will not be likely to make a great career in life?"

His reply was a shrug of the shoulders.

"And why not, pray?" asked she, defiantly.

"What if you were to ask Mark this question? Let him give you his impressions on this theme."

"I see what it is," cried she, warmly. "You two fine gentlemen have conspired against this poor simple boy—for really, in all dealings with the world, he is a boy; and you would like us to believe, that if we saw him under other circumstances, and with other surroundings, we should be actually ashamed of him. Now, Mr. Maitland, I resent this supposition at once, and I tell you frankly I am very proud of his friendship."

"You are pushing me to the verge of a great indiscretion; in fact, you have made it impossible for me to avoid it," said he, seriously. "I must now trust you with a secret, or what I meant to be one. Here it is. Of course, what I am about to tell you is strictly to go no further—never, never to be divulged. It is partly on this young man's account—chiefly so—that I am in Ireland. A friend of mine—that same Caffarelli of whom you heard—was commissioned by a very eccentric old Englishman who lives abroad, to learn if he could hear some tidings of this young Butler—what sort of person he was, how brought up, how educated, how disciplined. The inquiry came from the desire of a person very able indeed to befriend him materially. The old man I speak of is the elder brother of Butler's father;

very rich and very influential. This old man, I suppose, repenting of some harshness or other to his brother in former days, wants to see Tony—wants to judge of him for himself—wants, in fact, without disclosing the relationship between them, to pronounce whether this young fellow is one to whom he could rightfully bequeath a considerable fortune, and place before the world as the head of an honoured house; but he wants to do this without exciting hopes or expectations, or risking, perhaps, disappointments. Now I know very well by repute something of this eccentric old man, whose long life in the diplomatic service has made him fifty times more lenient to a moral delinquency than to a solecism in manners, and who could forgive the one and never the other. If he were to see your diamond in the rough he'd never contemplate the task of polishing—he'd simply say, 'This is not what I looked for; I don't want a gamekeeper, or a boatman, or a horse-breaker.'"

"Oh! Mr. Maitland."

"Hear me out. I am representing, and very faithfully representing, another; he'd say this more strongly too than I have, and he'd leave him there. Now, I'm not very certain that he'd be wrong; permit me to finish. I mean to say, that in all that regards what the old Minister-plenipotentiary acknowledges to be life, Master Tony would not shine. The solid qualities you dwelt on so favourably are like rough carvings; they are not meant for gilding. Now, seeing the deep interest you and all your family take in this youth, and feeling as I do a sincere regard for the old lady his mother, in whose society I have passed two or three delightful mornings, I conceived a sort of project which might possibly give the young fellow a good chance of success. I thought of taking him abroad—on the Continent—showing him something of life and the world in a sphere in which he had not yet seen it; letting him see for himself the value men set upon tact and address, and making him feel that these are the common coinage daily intercourse requires, while higher qualities are title-deeds that the world only calls for on emergencies."

"But you could never have persuaded him to such a position of dependence."

"I'd have called him my private secretary; I'd have treated him as my equal."

"It was very generous; it was nobly generous."

"When I thought I had made him presentable anywhere—and it would not take long to do so—I'd have contrived to bring him under his uncle's notice—as a stranger, of course:

if the effect were favourable, well and good; if it proved a failure, there was neither disappointment nor chagrin. Mrs. Butler gave me a half assent, and I was on the good road with her son till this morning, when that unlucky meeting has, I suspect, spoiled everything."

"But why should it?"

"Why should anything happen as men's passions or impulses decide it? Why should one man be jealous of the good fortune that another man has not won?"

She turned away her head and was silent.

"I'd not have told you one word of this, Mrs. Trafford, if I had not been so sore pressed that I couldn't afford to let you, while defending your friend, accuse me of want of generosity and unfairness. Let me own it frankly—I was piqued by all your praises of this young man; they sounded so like insidious criticisms on others less fortunate in your favour."

"As if the great Mr. Maitland could care for any judgments of mine," said she; and there was in her voice and manner a strange blending of levity and seriousness.

"They are the judgments that he cares most for in all the world," said he, eagerly. "To have heard from your lips one-half the praise—one-tenth part of the interest you so lately bestowed on that young man ——"

"Where are we going, George? What river is this?" exclaimed she, suddenly.

"To Tilney Park, ma'am; this is the Larne."

"But it's the upper road, and I told you to take the lower road, by Captain Graham's."

"No, ma'am; you only said Tilney."

"Is it possible? and didn't you tell him, Mr. Maitland?"

"I? I knew nothing of the road. To tell you the truth," added he, in a whisper, "I cared very little where it led, so long as I sat at your side."

"Very flattering, indeed! Have we passed the turn to the lower road very far, George?"

"Yes, ma'am; it's a good five miles behind us, and a bad bit of road too—all fresh stones."

"And you were so anxious to call at the cottage?" said she, addressing Maitland, with a smile of some significance.

"Nothing of the kind. I made some sort of silly promise to make a visit as I passed. I'm sure I don't know why, or to gratify whom."

"Oh, cruel Mr. Maitland—false Mr. Maitland! how can you say this? But are we to go back?—that is the question; for I

see George is very impatient, and trying to make the horses the same."

"Of course not. Go back! it was all the coachman's fault —took the wrong turning, and never discovered his blunder till we were—I don't know where."

"Tilney, George—go on," said she; then turning to Maitland, "and do you imagine that the charming Sally Graham or the fascinating Rebecca will understand such flimsy excuses as these, or that the sturdy old Commodore will put up with them?"

"I hope so, for their sakes at least; for it will save them a world of trouble to do so."

"Ungrateful as well as perfidious! You were a great favourite with the Grahams. Beck told me, the night before they left the Abbey, that you were the only *élégant*—exquisite she called it—she ever met that wasn't a fool."

"The praise was not extravagant. I don't feel my cheek growing hot under it."

"And Sally said that if she had not seen with her own eyes, she'd never have believed that a man with such a diamond ring, and such wonderful pendants to his watch, could hook an eight-pound salmon, and bring him to land."

"That indeed touches me," said he, laying his hand over his heart.

"And old Graham himself declared to my father that if one of his girls had a fancy that way, though you weren't exactly his style of man, nor precisely what he'd choose——"

"Do spare me. I beseech you, have *some* pity on me."

"That he'd not set himself against it; and that, in fact, with a good certificate as to character, and the approved guarantee of respectable people, who had known you some years——"

"I implore you to stop."

"Of course I'll stop when you tell me the theme is one too delicate to follow up; but, like all the world, you let one run into every sort of indiscretion, and only cry Halt when it is too late to retire. The Grahams, however, are excellent people—old G. G., as they call him, a distinguished officer. He cut out somebody or something from under the guns of a Spanish fort, and the girls have refused—let me see whom they have not refused; but I'll make them tell you, for we'll certainly call there on our way back."

The malicious drollery with which she poured out all this had heightened her colour and given increased brilliancy to her eyes. Instead of the languid delicacy which usually marked her

features, they shone now with animation and excitement, and became in consequence far more beautiful. So striking was the change, that Maitland paid little attention to the words, while he gazed with rapture at the speaker.

It must have been a very palpable admiration he bestowed, for she drew down her veil with an impatient jerk of the hand, and said, "Well, sir, doesn't this arrangement suit you, or would you rather make your visit to Port-Graham alone?"

"I almost think I would," said he, laughing. "I suspect it would be safer."

"Oh, now that I know your intentions—that you have made me your confidant—you'll see that I can be a marvel of discretion."

"Put up your veil again, and you may be as *maligne* as you please."

"There! yonder is Tilney," said she, hastily—"where you see those fine trees. Are the horses distressed, George?"

"Well, ma'am, they've had enough of it."

"I mean, are they too tired to go round by the river-side and the old gate?"

"It's a good two miles round, ma'am."

"Oh, I know what that means," said she, in a whisper. "If there should be anything amiss for the next three months, it will be that cruel day's work down at Tilney will be charged with it. Go in by the new lodge," added she, aloud; "and as they have innumerable carriages here, Mr. Maitland, I'll take you a drive over there to-morrow. It's a very nice thing, isn't it, to be as rich as old Mrs. Maxwell, and to be always playing the part of 'Good Fairy,' giving splendid banquets, delicious little country parties to all the world; offering horses to ride, boats to sail in? What *are* you looking at so fixedly?"

"I think I recognize a conveyance I once had the happiness to travel in. Isn't that the Graham equipage before us?"

"I declare it is!" cried she joyfully. "Oh, lucky Mr. Maitland; they are going to Tilney."

As she spoke, George, indignant at being dusted by a shambling old mare with long fetlocks, gathered up his team in hand, and sent them "spinning" past the lumbering jaunting-car, giving the Grahams only time to recognize the carriage and its two occupants.

CHAPTER XIX.

TONY'S TROUBLES.

When Tony Butler met Mrs. Trafford's carriage he was on his road, by a cross path, to the back entrance of Lyle Abbey. It was not his intention to pay a visit there at that moment, though he was resolved to do so later. His present errand was to convey a letter he had written to Maitland, accepting the proposal of the day before.

He had not closed his eyes all night thinking of it. There was a captivation in its promise of adventure that he felt to be irresistible. He knew too well the defects of his nature and of his intelligence not to be aware that, in any of the ordinary and recognized paths in life, he must see himself overtaken and left behind by almost all. What were called the learned professions were strictly debarred to him. Had he even the means for the study he would not have the qualities to pursue them.

He did not feel that he could take willingly to a trade; as little could he be a clerk. To be sure, he had obtained this appointment as messenger, but how disparagingly Maitland had spoken of it! He said, it is true they "weren't bad things"—that "gentlemen somehow or other managed to live on them;" but he hinted that these were gentlemen whose knowledge of life had taught them a variety of little accomplishments—such as whist, billiards, and écarté—which form the traffic of society, and a very profitable traffic too, to him who knows a little more of them than his neighbours. Worst of all, it was a career, Maitland said, that led to nothing. You can become an "old messenger," if you live long enough, but nothing more; and he pictured the life of a traveller who had lost every interest in the road he journeyed—who in, fact, only thought of it with reference to the time it occupied—as one of the dreariest of all imaginable things. "This monotony," added he, "will do for the fellow who has seen everything and done everything—not for the fresh spirit of youth, eager to taste, to learn and to enjoy. A man of your stamp ought to have a wider and better field

—a sphere wherein his very vitality will have fair-play. Try it; follow it if you can, Butler," said he; "but I'm much mistaken in you, if you'll be satisfied to sit down with a station that only makes you a penny-postman magnified." Very few of us have courage to bear such a test as this—to hear the line we are about to take, the service we are about to enter, the colony we are about to sail for, disparaged, unmoved. The unknown has always enough of terror about it without the dark forebodings of an evil prophet.

"I like Maitland's project better," said Tony, after a long night's reflection. "At all events, it's the sort of thing to suit *me*. If I should come to grief, it will be a sad day for poor mother; but the same might happen to me when carrying a despatch-bag! I think he ought to have been more explicit, and let me hear for whom I am to fight, though perhaps it doesn't much signify. I could fight for any one but Yankees! I think I'll say 'done.' This Maitland is a great 'Don'—has aparently fortune and station. It can't be a mistake to sail in the same boat with *him*. I'll certainly say 'done.'" With this resolve he jumped out of bed, and wrote the following brief note:—

"BURNSIDE, *Tuesday morning*.

"DEAR SIR,—I'll not take the three days you gave me to consider your offer; I accept it at once.—Yours truly,

"TONY BUTLER.

"NORMAN MAITLAND, Esq.,
Lyle Abbey."

"I'll have to write to Skeffy," said he to himself, "and say, you may tell my noble patron that I don't want the messengership, and that when next I call at the Office I'll kick Willis for nothing. I don't suppose that this is the formal way of resigning, but I take it they'll not be sorry to be quit of me, and it will spare the two old coves in white cravats all the trouble of having me plucked at the examination. Poor Skeffy won't be pleased, though; he was to have 'coached me' in foreign tongues and the Rule of Three. Well, I'm glad I'm in for a line of life where nobody asks about Colenso's Arithmetic, nor has so much as heard of Ollendorf's Method. Oh dear! how much happier the world must have been when people weren't so confoundedly well informed!—so awfully brimful of all knowledge as they now are! In those pleasant days, instead of being a black sheep, I'd have been pretty much like the rest of the flock."

The speculations on this topic—this golden age of ignorance and bliss—occupied him all the way, as he walked over the hills to leave his letter at the gate-lodge for Mr. Maitland.

Resisting all the lodge-keeper's inducements to talk—for he was an old friend of Tony's, and wanted much to know where he had been and what doing of late, and why he wasn't up at the Abbey every day as of yore—Tony refused to hear of all the sad consequences that had followed on his absence; how the "two three-year-olds had gone back in their training;" how "Piper wouldn't let a saddle be put on his back;" how the carp were all dying in the new pond, nobody knew why—there was even something gone wrong with the sun-dial over the stable, as though the sun himself had taken his departure in dudgeon, and wouldn't look straight on the spot since. These were, with many more, shouted after him as he turned away, while he, laughing, called out, "It will be all right in a day or two, Mat. I'll see to everything soon."

"That I'll not," muttered he to himself when alone. "The smart hussar—the brave Captain—may try his hand now. I'd like to see him on Piper. I only wish that he may mount him with the saddle tightly girthed; and if he doesn't cut a somerset over his head, my name isn't Tony! Let us see, too, what he'll do with those young dogs; they're wild enough by this time! I take it he's too great a swell to know anything about gardening or grafting—so much the worse for my lady's flower-pot! There's one thing I'd like to be able to do every morning of my life," thought he, in sadder mood—"just to give Alice's chestnut mare one canter, to make her neck flexible and her mouth light, and to throw her back on her haunches. And then, if I could only see Alice on her! just to see her as she bends down over the mane and pats the mare's shoulder to coax her not to buck-leap! There never was a picture that equalled it! the mare snorting, and with eyes flashing, and Alice all the while caressing her, and saying, 'How silly you are, Maida! come, now, do be gentle!'"

These thoughts set others in motion—the happy, happy days of long ago; the wild, half-reckless gallops over the fern-clad hills in the clear bright days of winter—or the still more delightful saunterings of a summer's eve on the sea-shore!—none of them—not one—ever to come back again. It was just as his reveries had reached so far that he caught sight of the four dappled greys—they were Alice's own—swinging smoothly along in that long easy stride, by which thoroughbreds persuade you that work is no distress to them. It was only as they

breasted the hill that he saw that the bearing-reins were not let down—a violation of a precept on which he was inexorable; and he hastened, with all the speed he could, to catch them ere they gained the crest of the ridge.

To say the truth, Tony was somewhat ashamed of himself for his long absence from the Abbey. If it was not ingratitude, it had a look of it. *They* knew nothing of what had passed between Mark and himself, and could only pronounce upon his conduct as fickleness, or worse; and he was glad of an opportunity to meet them less formally than by a regular morning visit. Either Alice and her sister, or Alice alone, were certain to be in the carriage; for Lady Lyle was too timid to trust herself with those "greys;" and so he bounded forward, his heart full of expectancy, and burning once more to hear that voice whose very chidings were as music to him.

He was close to the carriage before he saw Maitland; indeed, the sight of Alice, as he drew near, had so entranced him that he saw nothing else; but when his eyes did fall on her companion, a pang shot through him as though he had been stabbed. In the raging jealousy of the moment everything was forgotten but his passion—his hatred of that man. He'd have given his right hand to be able to hurl at him a mortal defiance, to have dared him to the death. Indeed, so far as the insolence of his stare could convey his meaning, it declared an open war between them. Nor did Maitland's attitude assuage this anger; he lay back with a cool assumption of superiority—an air of triumphant satisfaction—that seemed to say, Each of us is in the place that befits him.

So overcome was he by passion, that even Alice's invitation to get into the carriage sounded like an outrage to his ears. It was bitter enough to cast him off without making him witness the success of another. Maitland's daring to apologize for him—to explain away why he had or had not done this, that, or t'other—was more than his endurance could brook; and as he hurried away from the spot, dashing recklessly down cliff and crag, and sprang from rock to rock without a thought of the peril, he almost accused himself of cowardice and cold-bloodedness for not having insulted him on the instant, and, by some open outrage, forced upon him a quarrel from which there could be no retreating. "If I'd insulted him before her," cried he, "he never could have evaded me by calling me an angry boy."

"I'll have no companionship with him, at all events," said he, suddenly checking himself in his speed; "he shall neither

be leader nor comrade of mine. I'll get my letter back before it reach him." With this resolve he turned his steps back again to the Abbey. Although he knew well that he must reach the lodge before they could return from their drive, he hurried along as though his life depended on it. The keeper was out, but Tony dashed into the lodge, and found, as he expected, the letter on the chimney; he tore it into fragments, and turned away.

The day was already drawing to a close as he descended the little path to the Burnside, and saw his mother awaiting him in the porch. As he came nearer, he perceived that she held up a letter in her hand. "Something important, Tony dear," cried she. "It is printed at top, 'On H.M.'s Service,' and marked 'Immediate' underneath. I have been very impatient all the day for your return."

Although Tony's mood at the moment did not dispose him to be on the very best terms with the world at large, nor even with himself, he felt a strange sort of vain-glorious glow through him at being addressed on a great square-shaped envelope, "On Her Majesty's Service," and with a huge seal, the royal arms affixed. It imparted a sense of self-importance that was very welcome at such a moment. It was a spoonful of brandy to a man not far from fainting.

With all this, he didn't like his mother to see how much this gratified or interested him; and he tossed the letter to one side, and said, "I hope the dinner isn't far off; I'm very hungry."

"It will be on the table in a few minutes, Tony; but let us hear what Her Majesty wants with you."

"It's nothing that won't keep till I have eaten my dinner, mother; at all events, I don't mean to inquire."

"I suppose I may break the seal myself, then," said she, in a half-pique.

"If you like—if you have any curiosity in the matter."

"That I have," said she, tearing open the envelope.

"Why, it's nothing, after all, Tony. It's not from Her Majesty at all. It begins 'Dear Butler.'"

"It's from Skeffy," cried he, taking it from her hands, "and is far more interesting to me than if it came from the Premier."

Mrs. Butler sat down, disappointed and sad. It was a reminiscence of long ago, that formally-shaped document, with its big seal, reminding her of days when the Colonel—her Colonel—used to receive despatches from the War Office—grave documents of which he seldom spoke, but whose import-

ance she could read in the thoughtful lines of his face, and which always impressed her with his consequence. "Ah, dear!" sighed she, drearily, "who would have thought it?"

So is it very often in this same world of ours, that the outsides of things are only solemn cheats. The orderly, who terrifies the village as he dashes past at speed, is but the bearer of an invitation to dine. The ambassador's bag is filled not with protocols and treaties, but with fish-sauce or pickled walnuts; the little sack—marked "most important"—being chokefull of Russian cigarettes. Even lawn and lawyers' wigs are occasionally the external coverings to qualities that fall short of absolute wisdom; so that though Mrs. Butler exclaimed, "Who would have thought it?" one more conversant with life would have felt less surprise and less disappointment.

A laugh from Tony—almost a hearty laugh—startled her from her musings. "What is it, Tony dear?" asked she,—"what is it that amuses you?"

"I'll read it all for you, mother. It's from Skeffy, and you'd think you heard him talking, it's so like him.

"'F. O., *Sunday morning.*

"'Dear Butler,—What a fright you have given us all, old fellow, to have levanted so suddenly, leaving your traps with the waiter, as we first thought, but, as we afterwards discovered, exchanging them with one Rory Quin, who, apparently sorry for his bargain, came for three successive mornings to the hotel to find out your present whereabouts.'

"Do you understand him, mother?" asked Tony at this.

"Partly—go on."

He resumed,—"'Rory, however, would seem to have a private scrape of his own to occupy him now, for I found to-day that a policeman was waiting all the morning to arrest him, of which he seems to have had timely notice, for he did not appear, and "R. 960" says, with much solemnity, 'he won't come no more.'"

"What does that mean, Tony?"

"I can make nothing of it. I hope and trust that I am not the cause of the poor fellow's troubles. I'll write about this at once. 'More of all this, however, when we meet, which I rejoice to say will be soon. I have got fourteen days' leave, and am going over to your immediate neighbourhood, to visit an aunt, or a cousin, or a grandmother—if she likes—a certain Mrs. Maxwell of Tilney, who has lots of cash and no one to

leave it to—five thousand a-year in estate; I don't know what in the Threes; and is, they tell me, weighing all her relatives, real or imaginary, in the balance of her esteem, to decide who is to be the Lord of Tilney, and which of us would most worthily represent her name and house. Preaching for a call is nothing to this—and a C. S. examination is cakes and gingerbread to it. Just fancy a grand competitive dinner of both sexes, and the old lady watching who ate of her favourite dish, or who passed the decanter she "affectioned." Imagine yourself talking, moving, sneezing, smiling, or blowing your nose, with five thousand a-year on the issue. Picture to your mind the tortures of a scrutiny that may take in anything, from your complexion to your character, and which, though satisfied with your morals, might discover 'something unpleasing about your mouth.'

"Worst news of all, I hear that the great Norman Maitland is somewhere in your vicinity, and of course will be invited wherever anything is going on. If he cares to do it, I suppose he'll cut us all out, and that the old lady would rather fancy she made a graceful exit from life if this illustrious swell were to play chief mourner to her. By the way, do you know the man I'm talking of? He's a monstrous clever fellow, and a great mystery to boot. I know him very slightly; indeed, so slightly that I'm not sure he knows *me*.

"'As it would be invaluable to me to have a word of counsel from you, knowing nothing, or next to nothing, of my dear relative, I mean to start directly for you at once, and have one day with you before I go on to Tilney. Will this bore you, or inconvenience you? Is your house full? Most houses are at this time o' year.'"

At this Tony laid down the letter and laughed immoderately; not so, however, his mother. She turned her head away, and sat, with her hands closely locked, in silence.

"Isn't it good,—isn't it downright droll, mother, to ask if our house be so full of guests we have no room for another? I declare, though it has a sore side to it, the question overcomes me with its absurdity."

"That's not the way I'm looking at it, Tony," said she, sadly.

"But there's no other way to look at it. If one can't take that view of it, one would——" He stopped suddenly, for he saw the old lady lift her handkerchief to her eyes, and hold it there. "But you are right, mother," said he, quickly. "To bear it well, one needn't laugh at it. At all events, what answer are we to make him?"

"Finish the letter first."

"Ah, this is all about putting him up—anywhere—in a dressing-room or a closet. 'At Carlscourt last year they had nothing to give me but a bath-room. They used to quiz me about sleeping in "marble halls," for I lay in the bath.'"

"He seems a good-tempered creature," said the old lady, who could not repress a laugh this time.

"The best in the world; and such spirits! I wish you saw him do the back-somersault over a chair, or the frog's leap across a table. For all that, mother," said he, with a change of tone, "he's a perfect gentleman; and though he's very short—only so high—he looks a gentleman, too."

"I am not likely to forget all his kindness to you, Tony," said she, feelingly. "If we could only receive him suitably, I'd be happy and proud to do it; as it is, however, the man, being a gentleman, will put up all the better with our humble entertainment: so just tell him to come, Tony; but tell him also what he's coming to. His room will be pretty much like the bath-room, and the company he'll meet afterwards very unlike what he saw at the fine house."

"He'll take all in good part, or I'm much mistaken in him. So here goes for the answer:—

"'DEAR SKEFF,

"'We live in a cottage with five rooms. We have one maidservant, and we dine at two. If you have courage to face all this, you'll have the heartiest of welcomes from my mother and your sincere friend,

"'TONY BUTLER.

"'The mail will drop you at Coleraine, and I'll be on the look-out for you every morning from this forward.'

"Won't that do, mother?" asked he.

"I think you might have done it better; but I suppose you young folk understand each other best in your own fashion, so let it be."

CHAPTER XX.

THE MINISTER'S VISIT.

WHILE Tony was absent that morning from home, Mrs. Butler had a visit from Dr. Stewart; he came over, he said, to see Tony, and ask the news of what he had done in England. "I hope, ma'am," said he—and there was something dry and reserved in his manner—"I hope, ma'am, your son has brought you good tidings of his late journey. A big city is a big temptation, and we dinna want temptations in this world of ours."

"I know it well, doctor," said she, with a sigh, "and if it had been any other than Tony—— Ah, doctor! why do you shake your head? you make me think you've heard something or other. What is it, sir?"

"It's just nothing at all, Mrs. Butler, but your own fears, and very proper fears too they are, for a young lad that goes away from home for the first time in his life, and to such a place too. Ah me!" cried he, in a sort of apostrophe, "it's not so easy to be in grace down about Charing Cross and the Haymarket."

"You're just frightening me, Doctor Stewart, that's what it is you are doing."

"And I say it again, ma'am, it's yourself is the cause o' it all. But tell me what success he has had—has he seen Sir Harry Elphinstone?"

"That he has, and seen a greater than Sir Harry; he has come back with a fine place, doctor; he's to be one of the Queen's—I forget whether they call them couriers or messengers—that bring the state despatches all over the world; and as poor dear Tony says, it's a place that was made for him, for they don't want Greek or Latin, or any more book-learning than a country gentleman should have. What are you sighing about, Dr. Stewart? there's nothing to sigh over getting five, maybe six, hundred a-year."

"I was not sighing; I was only thinkin'. And when is he to begin this new life?"

"If you are sighing over the fall it is for a Butler, one of his

kith and kin, taking a very humble place, you may just spare your feelings, doctor, for there are others as good as himself in the same employ."

"And what does Sir Arthur say to it ma'am?" asked he, as it were to divert her thoughts into another course.

"Well, if you must know, Dr. Stewart," said she, drawing herself up and smoothing down her dress with dignity, "we have ventured to take this step without consulting Sir Arthur or any of his family."

A somewhat long silence ensued. At last she said, "If Tony was at home, doctor, he'd tell you how kindly his father's old friend received him—taking up stories of long ago, and calling him Watty, just as he used to do. And so if they did not give my poor boy a better place, it was because there was nothing just ready at the moment, perhaps—or nothing to fit him—for, as Sir Harry said, laughingly, 'We can't make you a bishop, I fear.'"

"I dinna see anything against it," muttered the old minister, not sorry for the chance of a shot against Episcopacy.

"I'm thinking, Dr. Stewart," said she, tartly, "that your rheumatism must be troubling you to-day; and, indeed, I'm ashamed to say I never asked you how the pains were?"

"I might be better, and I might be worse, ma'am," was the qualified reply, and again came a pause.

"Tony was saying the other day, doctor," resumed she, "that if you will try a touch of what he calls the white oils."

"I'm very much obliged to him, Mrs. Butler; he put a touch of the same white oils on my pony one day, and the beast that was always a lamb before just kicked me over his head when I got into the saddle."

"You forget, doctor, you are not a beast of burden yourself."

"We're all beasts of burden, ma'am—all of us—even the best, if there be any best! heavy laden wi' our sins, and bent down wi' our transgressions. No, no," added he, with a slight asperity, "I'll have none of his white oils."

"Well, you know the proverb, doctor, 'He that winna use the means must bear the moans.'"

"'Tis a saying that hasna much sense in it," said the doctor, crankily; "for who's to say when the means is blessed?"

Here was a point that offered so wide a field for discussion, that the old lady did not dare to make a rejoinder.

"I'll be going to Derry to-morrow, Mrs. Butler," resumed he, "if I can be of any service to you."

"Going to Derry, doctor? that's a long road for you!"

"So it is, ma'am; but I'm going to fetch back my dochter Dolly; she's to come by the packet to-morrow evening."

"Dolly coming home! How is that? You did not expect her, did you?"

"Not till I got her letter this morning; and that's what made me come over to ask if Tony had maybe told you something about how she was looking, and what sort of spirits she seemed in; for her letter's very short—only says, 'I've got a kind of longing to be back again, dear father; as the song says, 'It's hame, and it's hame, and it's hame I fain wad be;" and as I know well there will be an open heart and an open door to greet me, I'm off to-night for Liverpool.'"

"She's a good girl, and whatever she does it will be surely for the best," said the old lady.

"I know it well," and he wiped his eyes as he spoke. "But I'm sore troubled to think it's maybe her health is breaking, and I wanted to ask Tony about her. D'ye remember, ma'am, how he said she was looking?"

Now, if there was anything thoroughly repugnant to the old lady's habits, it was untruthfulness; and yet, as Tony had not mentioned Dolly since his return, her only escape was by a little evasion, saying, "When he wrote to me his first letter from London, doctor, he said, 'I was sorry to find Dolly looking pale, and I thought thin also; besides,' added he, 'they have cut off her pretty brown hair.'"

"Yes, she told me of that," sighed the doctor. "And in her last note she says again, 'Dinna think me a fright, father dear, for it's growing again, and I'm not half so ugly as I was three weeks ago;' for the lassie knows it was always a snare to me, and I was ever pleased wi' her bright cheery face."

"And a bright, cheery face it was!"

"Ye mind her smile, Mrs. Butler. It was like hearing good news to see it. Her mother had the same." And the old man's lip trembled, and his cheek too, as a heavy tear rolled slowly down it. "Did it ever strike you, ma'am," added he, in a calmer tone, "that there's natures in this world gi'en to us just to heal the affections, as there are herbs and plants sent to cure our bodily ailments?"

"It's a blessed thought, doctor."

"Eh, ma'am, it's more than a thought, it's a solemn truth. But I'm staying o'er long; I've to go over to John Black's and see his sister before I leave; and I'd like too, to say a word o' comfort to auld Matty McClintock."

"You'll be back for the Sabbath, doctor?" asked she.

"Wi' *His* help and blessing ma'am."

"I was thinking if maybe you and dear Dolly would come and take dinner here—Saturday—there will be nothing ready for you at home; and it would be such a pleasure to Tony before he goes away."

"I thank you heartily, Mrs. Butler; but our first evening under the auld roof we must e'en have it by ourselves. You'll no think the worse 'o us for this, I am sure, ma'am."

"Certainly not: then shall we say Monday? Dolly will be rested by that time, and Tony talks of leaving me so soon."

"I'll just, wi' your good leave—I'll just wait till I see Dolly; for maybe she'll no be ower strong when she comes. There's nothing I can do for you in Derry, is there?"

"Nothing, sir—nothing that I think of at this moment," said she, coldly; for the doctor's refusal of her second invitation had piqued her pride; and whether it was from his depression or some other cause, the doctor himself seemed less cordial than was his wont, and took his leave with more ceremony than usual.

The old lady watched him till he was out of sight, sorely perplexed to divine whether he had really unburthened his conscience of all he had to say, or had yet something on his mind unrevealed. Her kindly nature, however, in the end, mastered all other thoughts; and, as she sat down once more to her knitting, she muttered, "Poor man! it's a sore stroke of poverty when the sight of one's only child coming back to them brings the sense of distress and want with it." The words were not well uttered when she saw Tony coming up the little pathway; he was striding along at his own strong pace, but his hat was drawn down over his brows, and he neither looked right nor left as he went.

"Did you meet the doctor, Tony," said she, as she opened the door for him.

"No: how should I meet him? I've not been to the Burnside."

"But he has only left the house this minute—you must have passed each other."

"I came down the cliff. I was taking a short cut," said he, as he threw himself into a seat, evidently tired and weary.

"He has been here to say that he's off for Derry to-night with the mail to meet Dolly."

"To meet Dolly!"

"Yes, she's coming back; and the doctor cannot say why, for she's over that fever she had, and getting stronger every day;

and yet she writes, 'You must come and fetch me from Derry, father, for I'm coming home to you.' And the old man is sore distressed to make out whether she's ill again, or what's the meaning of it. And he thought, if he saw you, it was just possible you could tell him something."

"What could I tell him? Why should he imagine I could tell him?" said Tony, as a deep crimson flush covered his face.

"Only how she was looking, Tony, and whether you thought she seemed happy where she was living, and if the folk looked kind to her."

"I thought she looked very sickly, and the people about her —the woman at least—not over kind. I'm not very sure, too, that Dolly herself wasn't of my mind, though she didn't say so. Poor girl!"

"It's the poor old father I pity the most, Tony; he's not far off seventy, if he's not over it; and sore work he finds it keeping body and soul together; and now he has the poor sick lassie come back to him, wanting many a little comfort, belike that he can't afford her. Ah, dear! isn't there a deal of misery in this life?"

"Except for the rich," said Tony, with an almost savage energy. "They certainly have fine times of it. I saw that fellow, Maitland, about an hour ago, lolling beside Alice Lyle —Trafford, I mean, in her carriage, as if he owned the equipage and all it contained; and why? just because he is rich."

"He's a fine handsome man, Tony, and has fine manners, and I would not call him a fellow."

"I would, then; and if he only gives me the chance, I'll call him a harder name to his face."

"Tony, Tony, how can you speak so of one that wanted to befriend you?"

"Befriend me, mother! You make me ashamed to hear you say such a word. Befriend me!"

"What's the matter with you, Tony? You are not talking, no, nor looking like yourself. What's befallen you, my dear Tony? You went out this morning so gay and light-hearted, it made me cheery to see you. Ay, and I did what I've not done for many a day—I sang to myself over my work without knowing it, and now you're come back as dark as night. What's in it, my boy? tell your poor old mother. What's in it?"

"There's nothing in it my own little mother, except that

I'm a good-for-nothing, discontented dog, that sees himself in a very shabby condition, without having the pluck to try and get out of it. I say, mother, when are we to begin our lessons? That confounded river Danube goes between me and my rest. Whether it rises in the Black Sea or the Black Forest, is just as great a puzzle to me as whether the word is spelt peo or poe in people."

"Oh, Tony!"

"It's all very well saying, 'Oh, Tony;' but I tell you, mother, a stupid fellow ought never to be told two ways for anything: never say to him, you can do it in this fashion or in that; but, there's the road straight before you; take care you never go off it."

"Mr. Maitland made that same remark to me last week."

"Then don't tell it to me, for I hate him. By the way, there's that gun of his. I forgot to take it back to Lyle Abbey. I think it was precious cool in him to suppose a stranger—a perfect stranger, as I am—would accept a present from him."

"If you are going to the Abbey, Tony, I wish you'd leave these books there, and thank my lady for all her kind attentions to me; and say a word to Sir Arthur, too, to excuse my not seeing him when he called. Tell Gregg, the gardener, not to send me any more vegetables now; it's the scarce season, and they'll be wanting them for themselves; and if you should chance to see Mr. Lockyer, the steward, just mention to him that the new sluice is just no good at all, and when the rain comes heavy, and the mill is not working—the water comes up to the kitchen door. Are you minding me, Tony?"

"I'm not sure that I am," said he moodily, as he stood examining the lock of the well-finished rifle. "I was to tell Lady Lyle something about cabbages, or the mill-race—which was it?"

"You are not to make a fool of yourself, Tony," said she, half vexed and half amused. "I'll keep my message for another day."

"And you'll do well," said he; "besides, I'm not very sure that I'll go further than the gate-lodge;" and so saying, he took his hat, and, with the rifle on his shoulder, strolled out of the room.

"Ah! he's more like his father every day!" sighed she, as she looked after him; and if there was pride in the memory, there was some pain also.

CHAPTER XXI.

A COMFORTABLE COUNTRY-HOUSE.

If a cordial host and a graceful hostess can throw a wondrous charm over the hospitalities of a house, there is a feature in those houses where neither host nor hostess is felt which contributes largely to the enjoyment of the assembled company. I suspect, indeed, that republics work more smoothly domestically than nationally. Tilney was certainly a case in point. Mrs. Maxwell was indeed the owner—the demesne, the stables, the horses, the gardens, the fish-ponds, were all hers; but somehow none of the persons under her roof felt themselves her guests. It was an establishment which each lived as he liked, gave his own orders, and felt very possibly more at home, in the pleasant sense of the phrase, than in his own house. Dinner alone was a "fixture;" everything else was at the caprice of each. The old lady herself was believed to take great pride in the perfect freedom her guests enjoyed; and there was a story current of a whole family who partook of her hospitalities for three weeks, meeting her once afterwards in a watering-place, and only recognizing her as an old woman they saw at Tilney. Other tales there were of free comments of strangers made upon the household, the dinners, and such-like, to herself, in ignorance of who she was, which she enjoyed vastly, and was fond of relating, in strict confidence, to her few intimates.

If there were a number of pleasant features in such a household, there were occasionally little trifling drawbacks that detracted slightly from its perfect working—mere specks in the sun, it is true, and, after all, only such defects as are inseparable from all things where humanity enters and influences. One of these—perhaps the most marked one—was the presumption of certain *habitués* to instal themselves in certain rooms, which, from long usage, they had come to regard as their own. These prescriptive rights were so well understood that the frequenters of Tilney no more thought of disturbing

them than they would of contesting their neighbours' title-deeds, or appropriating to themselves some portions of their wardrobes. Occasionally, however, it did happen that some guest of more than ordinary pretension arrived—some individual whose rank or station placed him above these conventionalities—and in such cases some deviations from ordinary routine would occur, but so quietly and peacefully withal, as never to disturb the uniform working of the domestic machinery.

"I find my rooms always ready for me here," said Mrs. Trafford; "and I have no doubt that Mrs. Maxwell has given orders about yours, Mr. Maitland; but it's your own fault, remember, if you're not lodged to your liking."

Maitland was not long in making his choice. A little garden pavilion, which was connected with the house by a glass corridor, suited him perfectly; it combined comfort and quiet and isolation; who could ask for more? — within an easy access of society when it was wanted. There was the vast old garden, as much orchard and shrubbery as garden, to stroll in unobserved; and a little bath-room into which the water trickled all day long with a pleasant drip, drip, that sounded most soothingly.

"It's the Commodore's favourite place, sir, this garden-house," said the butler, who did the honours to Maitland, "and it's only a chance that he's not here to claim it. There was some mistake about his invitation, and I suppose he's not coming."

"Yes, I passed him a couple of miles off; he'll be here almost immediately."

"We'll put him up on the second floor, sir; the rooms are all newly done up, and very handsome."

"I'm sorry if I inconvenience him, Mr. Raikes;" said Maitland, languidly; "but I've got here now, and I'm tired, and my traps are half taken out; and, in fact, I should be sorrier still to have to change. You understand me—don't you?"

"Perfectly, sir; and my mistress, too, gave orders that you were to have any room you pleased; and your own hours, too for everything."

"She is most kind. When can I pay my respects to her?"

"Before dinner, sir, is the usual time. All the new company meet her in the drawing-room. Oh, there's the Commodore now; I hear his voice, and I declare they're bringing his trunks here, after all I said."

The old sailor was now heard, in tones that might have

roused a maindeck, calling to the servants to bring down all his baggage to the pavilion, to heat the bath, and send him some sherry and a sandwich.

"I see you're getting ready for me, Raikes," said he, as the somewhat nervous functionary appeared at the door.

"Well, indeed, Commodore Graham, these rooms are just taken."

"Taken! and by whom? Don't you know, and haven't you explained, that they are always mine?"

"We thought up to this morning, Commodore, that you were not coming."

"Who are 'we'—you and the housemaids, eh? Tell me who are 'we,' sir?"

"My mistress was greatly distressed, sir, at George's mistake, and she sent him back late last night."

"Don't bother me about that. Who's here—who has got my quarters? and where is he? I suppose it's a man."

"It's a Mr. Norman Maitland."

"By George, I'd have sworn it!" cried the Commodore, getting purple with passion. "I knew it before you spoke. Go in and say that Commodore Graham would wish to speak with him."

"He has just lain down, sir: he said he didn't feel quite well, and desired he mightn't be disturbed."

"He's not too ill to hear a message. Go in and say that Commodore Graham wishes to have one word with him. Do you hear me, sir?"

A flash of the old man's eye, and a tighter grasp of his cane —very significant in their way—sent Mr. Raikes on his errand, from which after a few minutes, he came back, saying, in a low whisper, "He's asleep, sir—at least I think so; for the bedroom door is locked, and his breathing comes very long."

"This is about the most barefaced—the most outrageously impudent——" he stopped, checked by the presence of the servant, which he had totally forgotten. "Take my traps back into the hall—do you hear me?—the hall."

"If you'd allow me, sir, to show the yellow rooms up-stairs, with the bow window——"

"In the attics, I hope?"

"No, sir—just over the mistress's own room on the second floor."

"I'll save you that trouble, Mr. Raikes; send Corrie here, my coachman—send him here at once."

While Mr. Raikes went, or affected to go, towards the stables

—a mission which his dignity secretly scorned—the Commodore called out after him, "And tell him to give the mare a double feed, and put on the harness again—do you hear me?—to put the harness on her."

Mr. Raikes bowed respectfully: but had the Commodore only seen his face, he would have seen a look that said—"What I now do must not be taken as a precedent—I do it, as the lawyers say, 'without prejudice.'"

In a glow of hot temper, to which the ascent of two pairs of stairs contributed something, the old Commodore burst into the room where his daughters were engaged unpacking. Sofas, tables, and chairs were already covered with articles of dress, rendering his progress a matter of very nice steering through the midst of them.

"Cram them in again—stow them all away!" cried he: "we're going back."

"Back where?" asked the elder, in at one of dignified resistance years of strong opposition had taught her.

"Back to Port-Graham, if you know such a place. I've ordered the car round to the door, and I mean to be off in a quarter of an hour."

"But why—what has happened? what's the reason for this?"

"The reason is, that I'm not going to be packed up in the top storey, or given a bed in a barrack room. That fellow Raikes—I'll remember it to him next Christmas—that fellow has gone and given the garden-house to that Mr. Maitland."

"Oh, is that all?" broke in Miss Graham.

"All, all! why, what more would you have! Did you expect that he had told me to brush his coat or fetch his hot water? what the d—l do you mean by all?"

"Then why don't you take Mrs. Chetwyn's rooms? they are on this floor. She's going now. They are most comfortable, and have a south aspect: by the way she was just talking of Maitland; she knows all about him, and he is the celebrated Norman Maitland."

"Ah, let us hear that, I want to unearth the fellow if I only knew how," said he taking a chair.

"There's nothing to unearth, papa," said the younger daughter. "Mrs. Chetwyn says that there's not a man in England so courted and fêted as he is; that people positively fight for him at country-houses; and it's a regular bait to one's company to say, 'We're to have Maitland with us?'"

"And who is he?"

"She doesn't know."

"What's his fortune."

"She doesn't know."

"Where is it?"

"She's not sure. It must be somewhere abroad—in India, perhaps."

"So that this old woman knows just as much as we do ourselves, which is simply nothing; but that people go on asking this man about to this dinner and that shooting just because they met him somewhere else, and he amused them."

"'Tis pretty clear that he has money, wherever it comes from," said Miss Graham, authoritatively. "He came to Hamilton Court with four hunters and three hackneys, the like of which were never seen in the county."

"Tell papa about his yacht," broke in the younger.

"I don't want to hear about his yacht; I'd rather learn why he turned me out of my old quarters."

"In all probability he never heard they were yours. Don't you know well what sort of house this is—how everybody does what he likes?"

"Why didn't Alice Lyle—Mrs. Tafford I mean—tell him that I always took these rooms."

"Because probably she was thinking of something else," said Miss Graham, significantly. "Mrs. Chetwyn watched them as they drove up, and she declared that, if Maitland hadn't his hand in her muff, her eyes have greatly deceived her."

"And what if he had?"

"Simply that it means they are on very excellent terms. Not that Alice will make any real conquest there: for, as Mrs. Chetwyn said, 'he has seen far too many of these fine-lady airs and graces to be taken by them;' and she added, 'a frank, outspoken, natural girl, like your sister there, always attracts men of this stamp.'"

"Why didn't he come over on Wednesday, then? It was his own appointment, and we waited dinner till seven o'clock, and have not had so much as one line—no, not one line of apology."

"Perhaps he was ill, perhaps he was absent; his note might have miscarried. At all events, I'd wait till we meet him, and see what explanation he'll make."

"Yes, papa," chimed in Beck, "just leave things alone. 'A strange hand on the rod never hooked the salmon,' is a saying of your own."

"There's that stupid fellow brought the car round to the door; just as if our splendid equipage hadn't attracted criticism enough

on our arrival," said Miss Graham, as she opened the window, and by a gesture, more eloquent than graceful, motioned to the servant to return to the stableyard: "and there come the post-horses," added she, "for the Chetwyns. Go now and secure her rooms before you're too late," and, rather forcibly aiding her counsel, she bundled the old Commodore out of the chamber, and resumed the unpacking of the wardrobe.

"I declare I don't know what he'll interfere in next," said Miss Graham.

"Yes," said Beck, with a weary sigh, "I wish he'd go back to the American war, and what we did or did not do at Ticonderoga."

Leaving these young ladies to discuss, in a spirit more critical than affectionate, the old Commodore's ways and habits, let us for a moment return to Maitland, who had admitted young Lyle after two unsuccessful attempts to see him.

"It's no easy matter to get an audience of you," said Mark. "I have been here I can't say how many times, always to hear Fenton lisp out, 'In the bath, sir.'"

"Yes, I usually take my siesta that way. With plenty of eau-de-Cologne in it, there's no weakening effect. Well, and what is going on here? any people that I know? I suppose not."

"I don't think it very likely; they are all country families, except a few refreshers from the garrison at Newry and Dundalk."

"And what do they do?"

"Pretty much the same sort of thing you'd find in an English country-house. There's some not very good shooting. They make riding parties. They have archery when it's fine, and billiards when it rains; but they always dine very well at seven, that much I can promise you."

"Not such a cook as your father's, Lyle, I'm certain."

"Perhaps not," said Mark, evidently flattered by the compliment. "But the cellar here is unequalled. Do you know that in the mere shadowy possibility of being one day her heir, I groan every time I see that glorious Madeira placed on the table before a set of fellows that smack their lips and say, 'It's good sherry, but a trifle too sweet for my taste.'"

"And this same heritage—how do the chances look?"

"I shall want your power of penetration to say that. One day the old woman will take me aside and consult me about fifty things; and the next she'll say, 'Perhaps we'd better make no changes, Mark. Heaven knows what ideas they may

have who'll come after me.' She drives me half distracted with these capricious turns."

"It is provoking, no doubt of it."

"I'd not care so much if I thought it was to fall to Bella; though, to be sure, no good-looking girl needs such a fortune as this. Do you know that the timber thrown down by the late gales is worth eight thousand pounds? and Harris the steward tells me it's not one-fourth of what ought to be felled for the sake of the young wood."

"And she has the whole and sole disposal of all this?"

"Every stick of it, and some six thousand acres besides!"

"I'd marry her if I were you. I declare I would."

"Nonsense! this is a little too absurd."

"Amram married his aunt, and I never heard that she had such a dower; not to say that the relationship in the present case is only a myth."

"Please to remember that she is about thirty years older than my mother."

"I bear it most fully in mind, and I scout the vulgar impertinences of those who ridicule these marriages. I think there is something actually touching in the watchful care and solicitude of a youthful husband for the venerable object of his affections."

"Well, you shall not point the moral by *my* case, I promise you," said Mark, angrily.

"That sublime spectacle that the gods are said to love—a great man struggling with adversity—is so beautifully depicted in these unions."

"Then why not ——" He was going to say, "Why not marry her yourself?" but the fear of taking such a liberty with his distinguished friend just caught him in time and stopped him.

"I'll tell you why not," said Maitland, replying to the unuttered question. "If you have ever dined at a civic fête, you'll have remarked that there is some one dish or other the most gluttonous alderman will suffer to pass untasted—a sort of sacrifice offered to public opinion. And so it is, an intensely worldly man, as people are polite enough to regard me, must show, every now and then, that there are temptations which he is able to resist. Marrying for money is one of these. I might speculate in a bubble company, I might traffic in cotton shares, or even 'walk into' my best friend at faro, but I mustn't marry for money—that's positive."

"But apparently *I* might," said Mark, sulkily.

"You might," replied Maitland, with calm dignity of manner.

"It is a privilege of which I do not mean to avail myself," said Mark, while his face was flushed with temper. "Do you know that your friends the Grahams are here?"

"Yes; I caught a glimpse of the fair Rebecca slipping sideways through life on a jaunting-car."

"And there's the old Commodore tramping over the house, and worrying every one with his complaints that you have turned him out of his rooms here—rooms dedicated to his comfort for the last thirty years."

"Reason enough to surrender them now. Men quit even the Treasury benches to give the Opposition a turn of office."

"He's a quarrelsome old blade, too," said Mark, "particularly if he suspects he's been 'put upon.'"

"No blame to him for that."

"A word or two, said as you well know how to say it, will set all right; or a line, perhaps, saying that having accidentally heard from me——"

"No, no, Mark. Written excuses are like undated acceptances, and they may be presented unexpectedly to you years after you've forgotten them. I'll tell the Commodore that I shall not inconvenience him beyond a day or two, for I mean to start by the end of the week."

"They expect you to come back with us. Alice told me you had promised."

"*L'homme propose*," said he sighing. "By the way, I saw that young fellow you told me about—Butler; a good-looking fellow too, well limbed and well set up, but not a marvel of good-breeding or tact."

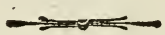
"Did he attempt any impertinences with *you?*" asked Mark, in a tone of amazement.

"Not exactly—he was not, perhaps, as courteous as men are who care to make a favourable impression; but he is not, as you suspected—he is not a snob."

"Indeed!" said Mark, reddening; for though provoked and angry, he did not like to contest the judgment of Norman Maitland on such a point. "You'll delight my sisters by this expression of your opinion; for my own part, I can only say I don't agree with it."

"The more reason not to avow it, Lyle. Whenever you don't mean very well by a man, never abuse him, since after that, all

your judgments of him become *suspect.* Remember that where you praise you can detract; nobody has such unlimited opportunities to poison as the doctor. There now—there's a bit of Machiavelism to think over as you dress for dinner, and I see it's almost time to do so."



CHAPTER XXII.

THE DINNER AT TILNEY.

When Maitland entered the drawing-room before dinner, the Commodore was standing in the window-recess pondering over in what way he should receive him, while Sally and Beck sat somewhat demurely watching the various presentations to which Mrs. Maxwell was submitting her much-valued guest. At last Maitland caught sight of where they sat, and hurried across the room to shake hands with them, and declare the delight he felt at meeting them. "And the Commodore, is he here?"

"Yes; I'll find him for you," said Beck, not sorry to display before her country acquaintance the familiar terms she stood on with the great Mr. Maitland.

With what a frank cordiality did he shake the old sailor's hand, and how naturally came that laugh about nothing, or something very close to nothing, that Graham said, in allusion to the warm quarters they found themselves in. "Such Madeira!" whispered he, "and some old '34 claret. By the way, you forgot your promise to taste mine."

"I'll tell you how that occurred when we've a quiet moment together," said Maitland, in a tone of such confidential meaning that the old man was reassured at once. "I've a good deal to say to you, but we'll have a morning together. You know every one here? Who is that with all the medals on his coat?"

"General Carnwroth; and that old woman with the blue turban is his wife; and these are the Grimsbys; and that short man with the bald head is Holmes of Narrow Bank, and the good-looking girl there is his niece—and heiress too."

"What red arms she has!" whispered Maitland.

"So they are, by Jove!" said Graham, laughing; "and I never noticed it before."

"Take me in to dinner," said Mrs. Trafford, in a low voice, as she swept past Maitland.

"I can't. Mrs. Maxwell has ordered me to give her my

arm," said he, following her, and they went along for some paces conversing.

"Have you made your peace with the Grahams?" asked she, smiling half-maliciously.

"In a fashion; at least I have put off the settling-day."

"If you take to those morning rambles again with the fair Rebecca, I warn you it will not be so easy to escape an explanation. Here's Mrs. Maxwell come to claim you."

Heaving with fat and velvet, and bugles, and vulgar good-humour, the old lady leaned heavily on Maitland's arm, really proud of her guest, and honestly disposed to show him that she deemed his presence an honour. "It seems like a dream to me," said she, "to see you here after reading of your name so often in the papers at all the great houses in England. I never fancied that old Tilney would be so honoured."

It was not easy to acknowledge such a speech, and even Maitland's self-possession was pushed to its last limits by it; but this awkward feeling soon passed away under the genial influence of the pleasant dinner. And it was as pleasant a dinner as good fare and good wine and a well-disposed company could make it.

At first a slight sense of reserve, a shade of restraint, seemed to hold conversation in check, and more particularly towards where Maitland sat, showing that a certain dread of him could be detected amongst those who would have fiercely denied if charged with such a sentiment.

The perfect urbanity, tinctured, perhaps, with a sort of racy humour, with which Maitland acknowledged the old Commodore's invitation to take wine with him, did much to allay this sense of distrust. "I say, Maitland," cried he from the foot of the table, "are you too great a dandy to drink a glass of wine with me?"

A very faint flush coloured Maitland's cheek, but a most pleasant smile played on his mouth as he said, "I am delighted, my dear Commodore—delighted to repudiate the dandyism and enjoy the claret at the same time."

"They tell me it's vulgar and old-fashioned, and I don't know what else, to take wine with a man," resumed the old sailor, encouraged by his success to engage a wider attention.

"I only object to the custom when practised at a royal table," said Maitland, "and where it obliges you to rise and drink your wine standing." As some of the company were frank enough to own that they heard of the etiquette for the first time, and others, who affected to be conversant with it,

ingeniously shrouded their ignorance, the conversation turned upon the various traits which characterize different courtly circles; and it was a theme Maitland knew how to make amusing—not vain-gloriously displaying himself as a foreground figure, or even detailing the experiences as his own, but relating his anecdotes with all the modest diffidence of one who was giving his knowledge at second-hand.

The old General was alone able to cap stories with Maitland on this theme, and told with some gusto an incident of his first experiences at Lisbon. "We had," said he, "a young attaché to our Legation there—I am talking of, I regret to say, almost fifty years ago. He was a very good-looking young fellow, quite fresh from England, and not very long, I believe, from Eton. In passing through the crowd of the ball-room, a long streamer of lace which one of the princesses wore in her hair caught in the attaché's epaulette. He tried in vain to extricate himself, but, fearing to tear the lace, he was obliged to follow the Infanta about, his confusion making his efforts only the more hopeless. 'Where are you going, sir? What do you mean by this persistence?' asked a sour-faced old lady-of-honour, as she perceived him still after them. 'I am attached to her Royal Highness,' said he in broken French, 'and I cannot tear myself away.' The Infanta turned and stared at him, and then instantly burst out a laughing, but so good-humouredly withal, and with such an evident forgiveness, that the duenna became alarmed, reported the incident to the Queen, and the next morning our young countryman got his orders to leave Lisbon at once."

While the company commented on the incident, the old General sighed sorrowfully—over the long past, perhaps—and then said, "He did not always get out of his entanglements so easily."

"You knew him, then?" asked some one.

"Slightly; but I served for many years with his brother, Wat Butler, as good a soldier as ever wore the cloth."

"Are you aware that his widow and son are in this neighbourhood?" asked Mrs. Trafford.

"No; but it would give me great pleasure to see them. Wat and I were in the same regiment in India. I commanded the company when he joined us. And how did he leave them?"

"On short rations," broke in old Graham. "Indeed, if it wasn't for Lyle Abbey, I suspect very hard up at times."

"Nothing of the kind, Commodore," broke in Mrs. Trafford. "You have been quite misinformed. Mrs. Butler is, without

affluence, perfectly independent; and more so even in spirit than in fortune."

A very significant smile from Maitland seemed to say that he recognized and enjoyed her generous advocacy of her friend.

"Perhaps you could do something, General, for his son?" cried Mrs. Maxwell.

"What sort of a lad is he?"

"Don't ask me, for I don't like him; and don't ask my sisters, for they like him too well," said Mark.

"Have you met him, Mr. Maitland?" asked the General.

"Yes, but passingly. I was struck, however, by his good looks and manly bearing. The country rings with stories of his courage and intrepidity."

"And they are all true," said Isabella Lyle. "He is the best and bravest creature breathing."

"There's praise—that's what I call real praise," said the General. "I'll certainly go over and see him after that."

"I'll do better, General," said Mrs. Maxwell; "I'll send over and ask him here to-morrow. Why do you shake your head Bella? He'll not come?"

"No," said she, calmly.

"Not if you and Alice were to back my request?"

"I fear not," said Alice. "He has estranged himself of late from every one; he has not been even once to see us since he came back from England."

"Then Mark will go and fetch him for us," said Mrs. Maxwell, the most unobservant of all old ladies.

"Not I, madam; nor would that be the way to secure him."

"Well, have him we must," said Mrs. Maxwell; while she added in a whisper to Mrs. Trafford, "It would never do to lose the poor boy such a chance."

"Beck says, if some one will drive her over to the Causeway," cried the Commodore, "she'll vouch for success, and bring young Tony back with her."

"Mr. Maitland offers himself," said Alice, whose eyes sparkled with fun, while her lips showed no trace of a smile.

"Take the phaeton, then," said Mrs. Maxwell, "only there will be no place for young Butler; but take a britscha, and order post-horses at Greme's Mill." And now a sharp discussion ensued which road was the shorter, and whether the long hill or the "new cut" was the more severe on the cattle.

"This was most unfair of you," said Maitland to Mrs. Trafford, as they rose from the table; "but it shall not succeed."

"How will you prevent it?" said she, laughing. "What can you do?"

"Rather than go I'd say anything."

"As, how, for instance?"

He leant forward and whispered a few words in her ear, and suddenly her face became scarlet, her eyes flashed passionately, as she said, "This passes the limit of jest, Mr. Maitland."

"Not more than the other would pass the limit of patience," said he; and now, instead of entering the drawing-room, he turned short round and sought his own room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST NIGHT AT TILNEY.

Maitland was not in the best of tempers when he retired to his room. Whatever the words he had whispered in Alice's ear —and this history will not record them—they were a failure. They were even worse than a failure, for they produced an effect directly the opposite to that intended.

"Have I gone too fast?" muttered he; "have I deceived myself? She certainly understood me well in what I said yesterday. She, if anything, gave me a sort of encouragement to speak. She drew away her hand, it is true, but without any show of resentment or anger; a sort of protest rather, that implied 'We have not yet come to this.' These home-bred women are hard riddles to read. Had she been French, Spanish, or Italian—ay, or even one of our own, long conversant with the world of Europe—I never should have blundered." Such thoughts as these he now threw on paper, in a letter to his friend Caffarelli.

"What a fiasco I have made, *Carlo mio*," said he, "and all from not understanding the nature of these creatures, who have never seen a sunset south of the Alps. I know how little sympathy any fellow meets with from you, if he be only unlucky. I have your face before me—your eyebrows on the top of your forehead, and your nether lip quivering with malicious drollery, as you cry out, '*Ma perche? perche? perche?*' And I'll tell you why: because I believed that she had hauled down her colours, and there was no need to continue firing.

"Of course you'll say, '*Meno male*,' resume the action. But it won't do, Signor Conte, it won't do. She is not like one of your hardened coquettes on the banks of the Arno, or the slopes of Castellamare, who think no more of a declaration of love than an invitation to dinner; nor have the slightest difficulty in making the same excuse to either—a pre-engagement. She is English, or worse again, far worse—Irish.

"I'd give—I don't know what I wouldn't give—that I could recall that stupid speech. I declare I think it is this fearful

language has done it all. One can no more employ the Anglo-Saxon tongue for a matter of delicate treatment, than one could paint a miniature with a hearth-brush. What a pleasant coinage for cajolery are the liquid lies of the sweet South, where you can lisp duplicity, and seem never to hurt the Decalogue."

As he had written so far, a noisy summons at his door aroused him, while the old Commodore's voice called out, "Maitland! Maitland! I want a word with you." Maitland opened the door, and without speaking returned to the fire, standing with his back to it, and his hands carelessly stuck in his pockets.

"I thought I'd come over and have a cigar with you here, and a glass of brandy-and-water," said Graham. "They're hard at it yonder, with harp and piano, and, except holystoning a deck, I don't know its equal."

"I'm the more sorry for your misfortune, Commodore, that I am unable to alleviate it. I'm deep in correspondence just now, as you see there, and have a quantity more to do before bed-time."

"Put it aside, put it aside; never write by candlelight. It ruins the eyes; and yours are not so young as they were ten years ago."

"The observation is undeniable," said Maitland, stiffly.

"You're six-and-thirty? well, five-and-thirty, I take it?"

"I'm ashamed to say I cannot satisfy your curiosity on so natural a subject of inquiry."

"Sally says forty," said he, in a whisper, as though the remark required caution. "Her notion is that you dye your whiskers; but Beck's idea is that you look older than you are."

"I scarcely know to which of the young ladies I owe my deeper acknowledgments," said Maitland, bowing.

"You're a favourite with both: and if it hadn't been for the very decided preference you showed, I tell you frankly they'd have been tearing caps about you ere this."

"This flattery overwhelms me; and all the more that it is quite unexpected."

"None of your mock modesty with me, you dog!" cried the Commodore, with a chuckling laugh. "No fellow had ever any success of that kind that he didn't know it; and, upon my life, I believe the very conceit it breeds goes half-way with women."

"It is no small prize to learn the experiences of a man like yourself on such a theme."

"Well, I'll not deny it," said he, with a short sigh. "I had my share—some would say a little more than my share—of that sort of thing. You'll not believe it, perhaps, but I was a

devilish good-looking fellow when I was—let me see—about six or eight years younger than you are now."

"I am prepared to credit it," said Maitland, dryly.

"There was no make-up about *me:* no lacquering, no paint, no padding—all honest scantling from keel to taffrail. I wasn't tall, it's true. I never, with my best heels on, passed five feet seven and a half."

"The height of Julius Cæsar," said Maitland, calmly.

"I know nothing about Julius Cæsar; but I'll say this, it was a good height for a sailor in the old gun-brig days, when they never gave you much head-room 'tween decks. It don't matter so much now if every fellow in the ward-room was as tall as yourself. What's in this jar here?"

"Seltzer."

"And this short one—is it gin?"

"No; it's Vichy."

"Why, what sort of stomach do you expect to have with all these confounded slops? I never tasted any of these vile compounds but once—what they called Carlsbad—and, by Jove, it was bad, and no mistake. It took three fourths of a bottle of strong brandy to bring back the heat into my vitals again. Why don't you tell Raikes to send you in some sherry? That old brown sherry is very pleasant, and it must be very wholesome too, for the doctor here always sticks to it."

"I never drink wine, except at my dinner," was the cold and measured reply.

"You'll come to it later on—you'll come to it later on," said the Commodore, with a chuckle, "when you'll not be careful about the colour of your nose or the width of your waistcoat. There's a deal of vanity wrapped up in abstemiousness, and a deal of vexation of spirit too." And he laughed at his own drollery till his eyes ran over. "You're saying to yourself, Maitland, 'What a queer old cove that is!'—ain't you? Out with it, man. I'm the best-tempered fellow that ever breathed—with the men I like, mind you; not with every one. No, no; old G. G., as they used to call me on board the *Hannibal*, is an ugly craft if you board him on the wrong quarter. I don't know how it would be now, with all the newfangled tackle; but in the old days of flint-locks and wide bores I was a dead shot. I've heard you can do something that way?"

"A little," said he, dryly.

"Every gentleman ought; I've always maintained it; as poor old Bowes used to say, 'With a strong head for port, and a steady hand for a pistol, a man may go a long way in this world.'

There, I think it's your turn now at the pump. I've had all the talk to myself since I came in, and the most you've done has been to grunt out 'Indeed!' or 'Really!'"

"I have listened, Commodore—listened most attentively. It has been my great privilege to have heard your opinions on three most interesting topics—women, and wine, and the duel; and, I assure you, not unprofitably."

"I'm not blown, not a bit run off my wind, for all that, if I wasn't so dry; but my mouth is like a lime-burner's hat. Would you just touch that bell and order a little sherry or Madeira? You don't seem to know the ways of the house here, but every one does exactly as he pleases."

"I have a faint inkling of the practice," said Maitland with a very peculiar smile.

"What's the matter with you this evening? You're not like yourself one bit. No life, no animation about you. Ring again; pull it strong. There, they'll hear that, I hope," cried he, as, impatient at Maitland's indolence, he gave such a jerk to the bell-rope that it came away from the wire.

"I didn't exactly come in here for a gossip," said the Commodore, as he resumed his seat. "I wanted to have a little serious talk with you, and perhaps you are impatient that I haven't begun it, eh?"

"It would be unpardonable to feel impatience in such company," said Maitland, with a bow.

"Yes, yes; I know all that. That's what Yankees call soft sawder; but I'm too old a bird, Master Maitland, to be caught with chaff, and I think as clever a fellow as you are might suspect as much."

"You are very unjust to both of us if you imply that I have not a high opinion of your acuteness."

"I don't want to be thought acute, sir: I am not a lawyer, nor a lawyer's clerk—I'm a sailor."

"And a very distinguished sailor."

"That's as it may be. They passed me over about the good-service pension, and kept 'backing and filling' about that coast-guard appointment till I lost temper, and told them to give it to the devil, for he had never been out of the Admiralty since I remembered it; and I said, 'Gazette him at once, and don't let him say, You're forgetting an old friend and supporter.'"

"Did you write that?"

"Beck did, and I signed it, for I've got the gout or the rheumatism in these knuckles, that makes writing tough work

for me, and tougher for the man it's meant for. What servants they are in this house!—no answer to the bell."

"And what reply did they make you?" asked Maitland.

"They shoved me on the retired list, and Curtis, the Secretary, said, 'I had to suppress your letter, or my Lords would certainly have struck your name off the Navy List'—a thing I defy them to do—a thing the Queen couldn't do!"

"Will you try one of these!" said Maitland, opening his cigar-case; "these are stronger than the pale ones."

"No; I can't smoke without something to drink, which I foresee I shall not have here."

"I deplore my inhospitality."

"Inhospitality! why, you have nothing to say to it. It is old mother Maxwell receives us all here. You can be neither hospitable nor inhospitable, so far as I see, excepting perhaps letting me see a little more of that fire than you have done hitherto, peacocking out the tail of your dressing-gown in front of me.'"

"Pray draw closer," said Maitland, moving to one side; "make yourself perfectly at home here."

"So I used to be, scores of times, in these very rooms. It's more than five-and-twenty years that I ever occupied any others."

"I was thinking of going back to the drawing-room for a cup of tea before I resumed my work here."

"Tea! don't destroy your stomach with tea. Get a little gin—they've wonderful gin here; I take a glass of it every night. Beck mixes it, and puts a sprig of, not mint, but marjoram, I think they call it. I'll make her mix a brew for you; and, by the way, that brings me to what I came about."

"Was it to recommend me to take gin?" asked Maitland, with a well-assumed innocence.

"No, sir—not to recommend you to take gin," said the old old Commodore, sternly. "I told you when I came in that I had come on an errand of some importance."

"If you did, it has escaped me."

"Well, you shan't escape me—that's all."

"I hope I misunderstand you. I trust sincerely that it is to the dryness of your throat and the state of your tonsils that I must attribute this speech. Will you do me the very great favour to recall it?"

The old man fidgeted in his chair, buttoned his coat, and unbuttoned it, and then blurted out in an abrupt spasmodic way, "All right—I didn't mean offence—I intended to say,

that as we were here now—that as we had this opportunity of explaining ourselves——"

"That's quite sufficient, Commodore. I ask for nothing beyond your simple assurance that nothing offensive was intended."

"I'll be hanged if I ever suffered as much from thirst in all my life. I was eighteen days on a gill of water a-day in the tropics, and didn't feel it worse than this. I must drink some of that stuff, if I die for it. Which is the least nauseous?"

"I think you'll find the Vichy pleasant; there is a little fixed air in it, too."

"I wish there was a little cognac in it. Ugh! it's detestable! Let's try the other. Worse! I vow and declare—worse! Well, Maitland, whatever be your skill in other matters, I'll be shot if I'll back you for your taste in liquors."

Maitland smiled, and was silent.

"I shall have a fever—I know I shall—if I don't take something. There's a singing in my head now like a chime of bells, and the back of my throat feels like a coal-bunker in one of those vile steamers. How you stand it I don't know; but to be sure you've not been talking as I have." The old Commodore rose, but when he reached the door, seemed suddenly to have remembered something; for he placed his hand to his forehead, and said, "What a brain I have! here was I walking away without ever so much as saying one word about it."

"Could we defer it till to-morrow, my dear Commodore?" said Maitland, coaxingly. "I have not the slightest notion what it is, but surely we could talk it over after breakfast."

"But you'll be off by that time. Beck said that there would be no use starting later than seven o'clock."

"Off! and where to?"

"To the Burnside—to the widow Butler's—where else! You heard it all arranged at dinner, didn't you?"

"I heard something suggested laughingly and lightly, but nothing serious, far less settled positively."

"Will you please to tell me, sir, how much of your life is serious, and how much is to be accepted as levity? for I suppose the inquiry I have to make of you amounts just to that, and no more."

"Commodore Graham, it would distress me much if I were to misunderstand you once again to-night, and you will oblige me deeply if you will put any question you expect me to answer in its very simplest form."

"That I will, sir; that I will! Now then, what are your intentions?"

"What are my intentions?"

"Yes, sir—exactly so; what are your intentions?"

"I declare I have so many, on such varied subjects, and of such different hues, that it would be a sore infliction on your patience were I only to open the budget; and as to either of us exhausting it, it is totally out of the question. Take your chance of a subject, then, and I'll do my best to enlighten you."

"This is fencing, sir; and it doesn't suit me."

"If you knew how very little the whole conversation suits *me*, you'd not undervalue my patience."

"I ask you once again, what are your intentions as regards my youngest daughter, Miss Rebecca Graham! That's plain speaking, I believe."

"Nothing plainer; and my reply shall be equally so. I have none—none whatever."

"Do you mean to say you never paid her any particular attentions?"

"Never."

"That you never took long walks with her when at Lyle Abbey, quite alone and unaccompanied?"

"We walked together repeatedly. I am not so ungrateful as to forget her charming companionship."

"Confound your gratitude, sir! it's not that I'm talking of. You made advances. You—you told her—you said—in fact, you made her believe—ay, and you made me believe—that you meant to ask her to marry you."

"Impossible!" said Maitland; "impossible!"

"And why impossible? Is it that our respective conditions are such as to make the matter impossible?"

"I never thought of such an impertinence, Commodore. When I said impossible, it was entirely with respect to the construction that could be placed on all my intercourse with Miss Graham."

"And didn't I go up to your room on the morning I left, and ask you to come over to Port-Graham and talk the matter over with me?"

"You invited me to your house, but I had not the faintest notion that it was to this end. Don't shake your head as if you doubted me; I pledge you my word on it."

"How often have you done this sort of thing? for no fellow is as cool as you are that's not an old hand at it."

"I can forgive a good deal——"

"Forgive! I should think you could forgive the people you've injured. The question is, can *I* forgive? Yes, sir, can *I* forgive?"

"I declare it never occurred to me to inquire."

"That's enough—quite enough; you shall hear from me. It may take me twenty-four hours to find a friend; but before this time to-morrow evening, sir, I'll have him."

Maitland shrugged his shoulders carelessly, and said, "As you please, sir."

"It shall be as I please, sir; I'll take care of that. Are you able to say at present to whom my friend can address himself?"

"If your friend will first do the favour to call upon me, I'll be able by that time to inform him."

"All right. If it's to be Mark Lyle——"

"Certainly not; it could never occur to me to make choice of your friend and neighbour's son for such an office."

"Well, I thought not—I hoped not; and I suspected, besides, that the little fellow with the red whiskers—that major who dined one day at the Abbey——"

Maitland's pale cheek grew scarlet, his eyes flashed with passion, and all the consummate calm of his manner gave way as he said, "With the choice of my friend, sir, you have nothing to do, and I decline to confer further with you."

"Eh, eh! that shell broke in the magazine, did it? I thought it would. I'll be shot but I thought it would!" And with a hearty laugh, but bitter withal, the old Commodore seized his hat and departed.

Maitland was much tempted to hasten after the Commodore and demand—imperiously demand—from him an explanation of his last words, whose taunt was even more in the manner than the matter. Was it a mere chance hit, or did the old sailor really know something about the relations between himself and M'Caskey? A second or two of thought reassured him, and he laughed at his own fears, and turned once more to the table to finish his letter to his friend.

"You have often, my dear Carlo, heard me boast, that amidst all the shifting chances and accidents of my life, I had ever escaped one signal misfortune—in my mind, about the greatest that ever befalls a man. I have never been ridiculous. This can be my triumph no longer. The charm is broken! I suppose, if I had never come to this blessed country, I might have preserved my immunity to the last; but you might as well try

to keep your gravity at one of the Polichinello combats at Naples as preserve your dignity in a land where life is a perpetual joke, and where the few serious people are so illogical in their gravity, they are the best fun of all. Into this strange society I plunged as fearlessly as a man does who has seen a large share of life, and believes that the human crystal has no side he has not noticed; and the upshot is, I am supposed to have made warm love to a young woman that I scarcely flirted with, and am going to be shot at to-morrow by her father for not being serious in my intentions! You may laugh—you may scream, shout, and kick with laughter, and I almost think I can hear you; but it's a very embarrassing position, and the absurdity of it is more than I can face.

"Why did I ever come here? What induced me ever to put foot in a land where the very natives do not know their own customs, and where all is permitted and nothing is tolerated? It is too late to ask you to come and see me through this troublesome affair; and indeed my present vacillation is whether to marry the young lady or run away bodily; for I own to you I am afraid—heartily afraid—to fight a man that might be my grandfather; and I can't bear to give the mettlesome old fellow the fun of shooting at me for nothing. And worse—a thousand times worse than all this—Alice will have such a laugh at me! Ay, Carlo, here is the sum of my affliction.

"I must close this, as I shall have to look out for some one long of stride and quick of eye, to handle me on the ground. Meanwhile, order dinner for two on Saturday week, for I mean to be with you; and, therefore, say nothing of those affairs which interests us, *ultra montani*. I write by this post to M'C. to meet me as I pass through Dublin; and, of course, the fellow will want money. I shall, therefore, draw on Cipriani for whatever is necessary, and you must be prepared to tell him the outlay was indispensable. I have done nothing, absolutely nothing, here—neither seduced man nor woman, and am bringing back to the cause nothing greater or more telling than

"Norman Maitland."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STARLIT NIGHT IN A GARDEN.

It was late at night, verging indeed on morning, when Maitland finished his letter. All was silent around, and in the great house the lights were extinguished, and apparently all retired to rest. Lighting his cigar he strolled out into the garden. The air was perfectly still; and although there was no moon, the sky was spangled over with stars, whose size seemed greater seen through the thin frosty atmosphere. It was pre-eminently the bright clear elastic night of a northern latitude, and the man of pleasure in a thousand shapes, the voluptuary, the *viveur*, was still able to taste the exquisite enjoyment of such an hour, as though his appetite for pleasure had not been palled by all the artifices of a life of luxury. He strolled about at random from alley to alley, now stopping to inhale the rich odour of some half-sleeping plant, now loitering at some old fountain, and bathing his temples with the ice-cold water. He was one of those men—it is not so small a category as it might seem—who fancy that the same gifts which win success socially, would be just as sure to triumph if employed in the wider sphere of the great ambitions of life. He could count the men he had passed, and easily passed, in the race of social intercourse—men who, at a dinner-table or in a drawing-room, had not a tithe of his quickness, his versatility, his wit, or his geniality, and yet, plodding onwards and upwards, had attained station, eminence, and fortune; while he—he, well read, accomplished, formed by travel and polished by cultivation—there he was! just as he had begun the world, the only difference being those signs of time that tell as fatally on temperament as on vigour; for the same law that makes the hair grey and the cheek wrinkled, renders wit sarcastic and humour malevolent.

Maitland believed—honestly believed—he was a better man than this one here who held a high command in India, and that other who wrote himself Secretary of State. He knew how little effort it had cost him, long ago, to leave "scores of such fellows" behind at school and at the university: but he, un-

happily, forgot that in the greater battle of life he had made no such efforts, and laid no tax on either his industry or his ability. He tried—he did his very best—to undervalue, to his own mind, their successes, and even asked himself aloud, "Which of them all do I envy?" but conscience is stronger than casuistry, however crafty it be, and the answer came not so readily as he wished.

While he thus mused, he heard his name uttered, so close to him, too, that he started, and, on looking up, saw that Mrs. Trafford's rooms were lighted, and one of the windows which "gave" upon a terrace was open. Voices came from the room within, and soon two figures passed out on the terrace, which he speedily recognized to be Alice and Mark Lyle.

"You mistake altogether, Mark," said she, eagerly. "It is no question whatever, whether your friend Mr. Maitland goes away disgusted with Ireland, and sick of us all. It is a much graver matter here. What if he were to shoot this old man? I suppose a fine gentleman as he is would deem it a very suitable punishment to any one who even passingly angered him."

"But why should there be anything of the kind? It is to me Maitland would come at once if there were such a matter in hand."

"I'm not so sure of that; and I am sure that Raikes overheard provocation pass between them, and that the Commodore left this half an hour ago, merely telling Sally that he had forgotten some lease or law paper that he ought to have sent off by post."

"If that be the case, there's nothing to be done."

"How do you mean nothing to be done?"

"I mean, that as Maitland has not consulted me, I have no pretence to know anything about it."

"But if you do know it, and if I tell it to you?"

"All that would not amount to such knowledge as I could avail myself of. Maitland is not a man with whom any one can take liberties, Alice."

"What?" said she, haughtily, and as though she had but partly heard his speech.

"I said that no man takes liberties with Maitland."

A very insolent laugh from Alice was the answer.

"Come, come," cried Mark, angrily. "All these scornful airs are not in keeping with what you yourself wrote about Maitland to Bella just two days ago."

"And had Bella——did she show you my letters?"

"I don't believe she intended me to see the turned-down

bit at the end; but I did see it, and I read a very smart sketch of Norman Maitland, but not done by an unfriendly hand."

"It's not too late to revoke my opinion," said she, passionately. "But this is all quite beside what I'm thinking of. Will you go down and see Mr. Maitland?"

"He's in bed and asleep an hour ago."

"He is not. I can see the light on the gravel from his windows; and if he were asleep, he could be awakened, I suppose."

"I have not the slightest pretext to intrude upon him, Alice."

"What nonsense all this is! Who is he—what is he, that he must be treated with all this deference?"

"It's somewhat too late in the day to ask who and what the man is, of whom every society in Europe contests the possession."

"My dear Mark, be reasonable. What have we to do just now with all the courtly flatteries that have been extended to your distinguished friend, or the thousand and one princesses he might have married. What I want is, that he shouldn't, first of all, make a great scandal; and secondly, shoot a very worthy old neighbour, whose worst sin is being very tiresome."

"And what I want is, first, that Maitland shouldn't carry away from this county such an impression, that he'd never endure the thought of revisiting it; and secondly, I want to go to bed, and so good-night."

"Mark, one word—only one," cried she, but he was gone: the bang of a heavy door resounded, and then a deep silence showed she was alone.

Maitland watched her as she paced the terrace from end to ended with impatient steps. There was a secret pleasure in his heart as he marked all the agitation that moved her, and thought what a share he himself had in it all. At last she withdrew within the room, but the opening and shutting of a door followed, and he surmised that she had passed out. While he was disputing with himself whether she might have followed Mark to his room, he heard a footstep on the gravel, and saw that she was standing and tapping with her finger on the window of his chamber. Maitland hurried eagerly back. "Is it possible that I see you here, Mrs. Trafford," cried he, "at this hour?"

She started, and for a moment seemed too much overcome to answer, when she said, "You may believe that it is no light

cause brings me; and even now I tremble at what I am doing: but I have begun and I'll go on. Let us walk this way, for I want to speak with you."

"Will you take my arm?" said Maitland, but without anything of gallantry in his tone.

"No—yes I will," said she, hurriedly; and now for some paces they moved along side by side in silence.

"Mr. Maitland," said she at last, "a silly speech I made today at dinner has led to a most serious result, and Commodore Graham and you have quarrelled."

"Forgive me if I interrupt you. Nothing that fell from you has occasioned any rupture between Commodore Graham and myself; for that I can pledge you my word of honour."

"But you have quarrelled. Don't deny it."

"We had a very stupid discussion, and a difference; and I believe, if the Commodore would have vouchsafed me a patient hearing, he would have seen that he had really nothing to complain of on my part. I am quite ready to make the same explanation to any friend he will depute to receive it."

"It was, however, what I said about your driving over with Miss Rebecca Graham to the Burnside that led to all this."

"Nothing of the kind I assure you."

"Well, I don't care for the reason," said she impatiently; "but you have had a quarrel, and are about to settle it by a duel. I have no doubt," continued she, more rapidly, "that you, Mr. Maitland, can treat this sort of thing very lightly. I suppose it is part of your code as man of the world to do so; but this old man is a father; his life, however little you may think of it, is of very great consequence to his family; he is an old friend and neighbour whom we all care for, and any mishap that might befall him would be a calamity to us all."

"Pray continue," said he softly; "I am giving you all my attention. Having given the sketch of one of so much value to his friends, I am waiting now to hear of the other whom nobody is interested for."

"This is no time for sarcasm, however witty, Mr. Maitland; and I am sure your better feeling will tell you that I could not have come here to listen to it. Do not be offended with me for my bluntness, nor refuse what I have asked you."

"You have not asked anything from me," said he, smiling.

"Well, I will now," said she, with more courage in her tone; "I will ask you not to go any further in this affair—to pledge your word to me that it shall stop here."

"Remember I am but one; any promise I may make you can only take effect with the concurrence of another."

"I know nothing—I want to know nothing—of these subtleties; tell me flatly you'll not give this old man a meeting."

"I will, if you'll only say how I am to avoid it. No, no; do not be angry with me," said he, slightly touching the hand that rested on his arm. "I'd do far more than this to win one, even the faintest smile that ever said, 'I thank you;' but there is a difficulty here. You don't know with what he charges me."

"Perhaps I suspect it."

"It is that after paying most marked attention to his daughter, I have suddenly ceased to follow up my suit, and declared that I meant nothing by it."

"Well?" said she, quietly.

"Well," repeated he. "Surely no one knows better than you that there was no foundation for this."

"I! how should I know it?"

"At all events," replied he, with some irritation of manner, "you couldn't believe it."

"I declare I don't know," said she hesitatingly, for the spirit of drollery had got the better even of the deep interest of the moment.

"I declare I don't know, Mr. Maitland. There is a charm in the manner of an unsophisticated country girl which men of the world are often the very first to acknowledge."

"Charming unsophistication!" muttered he, half aloud.

"At all events, Mr. Maitland, it is no reason that because you don't admire a young lady, you are to shoot her papa."

"How delightfully illogical you are!" said he, and, strangely enough, there was an honest admiration in the way he said it.

"I don't want to convince, sir; I want to be obeyed. What I insist upon is, that this matter shall end here. Do you mind, Mr. Maitland, that it end here?"

"Only show me how, and I obey you."

"Do you mean to say that with all your tact and cleverness, you cannot find a means of showing that you have been misapprehended, that you are deeply mortified at being misunderstood, that by an expression of great humility—do you know how to be humble?"

"I can be abject," said he with a peculiar smile.

"I should really like to see you abject!" said she, laughingly.

"Do so then," cried he, dropping on his knee before her, while he still held her hand, but with a very different tone of voice—a voice now tremulous with earnest feeling—continued, "There

can be no humility deeper than that with which I ask your forgiveness for one word I spoke to you this evening. If you but knew all the misery it has caused me."

"Mr. Maitland, this mockery is a just rebuke for my presence here. If I had not stooped to such a step, you would never have dared this."

"It is no mockery to say what my heart is full of, and what you will not deny you have read there. No, Alice, you may reject my love; you cannot pretend to ignore it."

Though she started as he called her Alice, she said nothing, but only withdrew her hand. At last she said "I don't think this is very generous of you. I came to ask a great favour at your hands, and you would place me in a position not to accept it."

"So far from that," said he, rising, "I distinctly tell you that I place all, even my honour, at your feet, and without one shadow of a condition. You say you came here to ask me a favour, and my answer is, that I accord whatever you ask, and make no favour of it. Now what is it you wish me to do?"

"It's very hard not to believe you sincere when you speak in this way," said she in a low voice.

"Don't try," said he, in the same low tone.

"You promise me, then, that nothing shall come of this?"

"I do," said he, seriously.

"And that you will make any amends the Commodore's friend may suggest? Come, come," said she, laughing, "I never meant that you were to marry the young lady."

"I really don't know how far you were going to put my devotion to the test."

The pleasantness with which he spoke this so amused her that she broke again into laughter, and laughed heartily too. "Confess," said she at last—"confess it's the only scrape you did not see your way out of!"

"I am ready to confess it's the only occasion in my life in which I had to place my honour in the hands of a lady."

"Well, let us see if a lady cannot be as adroit as a gentleman in such an affair; and now, as you are in my hands, Mr. Maitland—completely in *my* hands—I am peremptory, and my first orders are, that you keep close arrest. Raikes will see that you are duly fed, and that you have your letters and the newspapers; but mind, on any account, no visitors without my express leave: do you hear me, sir?"

"I do; and all I would say is this, that if the tables should ever turn, and it would be my place to impose conditions,

take my word for it, I'll be just as absolute. Do you hear me, madam?"

"I do; and I don't understand, and I don't want to understand you," said she, in some confusion. "Now, good-bye. It is almost day. I declare that grey streak there is day-break!"

"Oh, Alice, if you would let me say one word—only one—before we part."

"I will not, Mr. Maitland; and for this reason, that I intend we should meet again."

"Be it so," said he, sadly, and turned away. After he had walked a few paces, he stopped and turned round; but she was already gone, how and in what direction he knew not. He hurried first one way, then another, but without success. If she had passed into the house—and of course she had—with what speed she must have gone! Thoughtful, but not unhappy, he returned to his room, if not fully assured that he had done what was wisest, well disposed to hope favourably for the future.

CHAPTER XXV.

JEALOUS TRIALS.

When Mrs. Maxwell learned in the morning that Mr. Maitland was indisposed and could not leave his room, that the Commodore had gone off in the night, and Mark and Mrs. Trafford had started by daybreak, her amazement became so insupportable that she hastened from one of her guests to the other, vainly asking them to explain these mysteries.

"What a fidgety old woman she is!" said Beck Graham, who had gone over to Bella Lyle, then a prisoner in her room from a slight cold. "She has been rushing over the whole house inquiring if it be possible that my father has run away with Alice, that your brother is in pursuit of them, and Mr. Maitland taken poison in a moment of despair. At all events, she has set every one guessing and gossiping at such a rate that all thought of archery is forgotten, and even our private theatricals have lost their interest in presence of this real drama."

"How absurd!" said Bella, languidly.

"Yes, it's very absurd to fill one's house with company, and give them no better amusement than the chit-chat of a boarding-house. I declare I have no patience with her."

"Where did your father go?"

"He went over to Port-Graham. He suddenly bethought him of a lease—I think it was a lease—he ought to have sent off by post, and he was so eager about it that he started without saying good-bye. And Mark—what of him and Alice?"

"There's all the information I can give you," and she handed her a card with one line in pencil: "Good-bye till evening, Bella. You were asleep when I came in.—Alice."

"How charmingly mysterious! And you have no idea where they've gone?"

"Not the faintest; except, perhaps, back to the Abbey for some costumes that they wanted for that 'great tableau.'"

"I don't think so," said she, bluntly. "I suspect—shall I tell you what I suspect? But it's just as likely you'll be angry,

for you Lyles will never hear anything said of one of you. Yes, you may smile, my dear, but it's well known, and I'm not the first who has said it."

"If that be true, Beck, it were best not to speak of people who are so excessively thin-skinned."

"I don't know that. I don't see why you are to be indulged any more than your neighbours. I suppose every one must take his share of that sort of thing."

Bella merely smiled, and Rebecca continued: "What I was going to say was this—and of course you are at liberty to dissent from it if you like—that, however clever a tactician your sister is, Sally and I saw her plan of campaign at once. Yes, dear, if you had been at dinner yesterday you'd have heard a very silly project thrown out about my being sent over to fetch Tony Butler, under the escort of Mr. Norman Maitland. Not that it would have shocked me, or frightened me in the least—I don't pretend that; but as Mr. Maitland had paid me certain attentions at Lyle Abbey—you look quite incredulous, my dear, but it is simply the fact; and so having, as I said, made these advances to me, there would have been considerable awkwardness in our going off together a drive of several hours without knowing—without any understanding——" She hesitated for the right word, and Bella added, "*A quoi s'en tenir*, in fact."

"I don't know exactly what that means, Bella; but in plain English, I wished to be sure of what he intended. My dear child, though that smile becomes you vastly, it also seems to imply that you are laughing at my extreme simplicity, or my extreme vanity, or both."

Bella's smile faded slowly away; but a slight motion of the angle of the mouth showed that it was not without an effort she was grave.

"I am quite aware," resumed Beck, "that it requires some credulity to believe that one like myself could have attracted any notice when seen in the same company with Alice Lyle—Trafford, I mean—and her sister; but the caprice of men, my dear, will explain anything. At all events, the fact is there, whether one can explain it or not; and to prove it, papa spoke to Mr. Maitland on the morning we came away from the Abbey—but so hurriedly—for the car was at the door, and we were seated on it—that all he could manage to say was, that if Mr. Maitland would come over to Port-Graham and satisfy him on certain points—the usual ones, I suppose—that—that, in short, the matter was one which did not offer insurmountable obstacles,

All this sounds very strange to your ears, my dear, but it is strictly true, every word of it."

"I cannot doubt whatever you tell me," said Bella, and now she spoke with a very marked gravity.

"Away we went," said Rebecca, who had now got into the sing-song tone of a regular narrator—"away we went, our first care on getting back home being to prepare for Mr. Maitland's visit. We got the little green-room ready, and cleared everything out of the small store-closet at the back, and broke open a door between the two so as to make a dressing-room for him, and we had it neatly papered, and made it really very nice. We put up that water-coloured sketch of Sally and myself making hay, and papa leaning over the gate; and the little drawing of papa receiving the French commander's sword on the quarter-deck of the *Malabar:* in fact, it was as neat as could be—but he never came. No, my dear—never."

"How was that?"

"You shall hear—that is, you shall hear what followed, for explanation I have none to give you. Mr. Maitland was to have come over on the Wednesday following to dinner. Papa said five, and he promised to be punctual; but he never came, nor did he send one line of apology. This may be some new-fangled politeness, the latest thing in that fashionable world he lives in, but still I cannot believe it is practised by well-bred people. Be that as it may, my dear, we never saw him again till yesterday, when he passed us in your sister's fine carriage-and-four, he lolling back this way, and making a little gesture, so, with his hand as he swept past, leaving us in a cloud of dust that totally precluded him from seeing whether we had returned his courtesy—if he cared for it. That's not all," she said, laying her hand on Bella's arm. "The first thing he does on his arrival here is to take papa's rooms. Well—you know what I mean—the rooms papa always occupies here; and when Raikes remarks, 'These are always kept for Commodore Graham, sir; they go by the name of the Commodore's quarters,' his reply is, 'They'll be better known hereafter as Mr. Norman Maitland's, Mr. Raikes.' Word for word what he said; Raikes told me himself. As for papa, he was furious; he ordered the car to the door, and dashed into our room, and told Sally to put all the things up again—that we were going off. I assure you it was no easy matter to calm him down. You have no idea how violent he is in one of these tempers; but we managed at last to persuade him that it was a mere accident, and Sally began telling him the wonderful things she

had heard about Maitland from Mrs. Chetwyn, his fortune and his family, and what not. At last he consented to take the Chetwyns' rooms, and down we went to meet Mr. Maitland—I own, not exactly certain on what terms it was to be. Cordial is no name for it, Bella; he was—I won't call it affectionate—but I almost might: he held my hand so long that I was forced to draw it away, and then he gave a little final squeeze in the parting and a look that said very plainly, 'We at least understand each other.' It was at that instant, my dear, Alice opened the campaign."

"Alice! What had Alice to do with it?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever by right, but everything if you admit interference and—well, I'll not say a stronger word to her own sister. I'll keep just to fact, and leave the commentary on this to yourself. She crosses the drawing-room—the whole width of the large drawing-room—and, sweeping grandly past us in that fine Queen-of-Sheba style she does so well, she throws her head back—it was that stupid portrait-painter, Hillyer, told her 'it gave action to the features'—and says, 'take me into dinner will you?' But she was foiled; old Mrs. Maxwell had already bespoke him. I hope you're satisfied now, Bella, that this is no dream of mine."

"But I cannot see any great mischief in it either."

"Possibly not. I have not said that there was. Sally's no fool, however, and her remark was—'There's nothing so treacherous as a widow.'"

Bella could not contain herself any longer, but laughed heartily at this profound sentiment.

"Of course we do not expect you to see this with our eyes, Bella, but we're not blind for all that. Later on came the project for fetching over Tony Butler, when Alice suggested that Mr. Maitland was to drive me over to the Burnside——"

"Was that so very ungenerous, then?"

"In the way it was done, my dear—in the way it was done. In that ha, ha, ha! manner, as though to say, 'Hadn't you both better go off on a lark to-morrow that will set us all talking of you?'"

"No, no! I'll not listen to this," cried Bella, angrily; "these are not motives to attribute to my sister."

"Ask herself; let her deny it, that's all; but, as Sally says, 'There's no playing against a widow, because she knows every card in your hand.'"

"I really had no idea they were so dangerous," said Bella, recovering all her good-humour again.

"You may perhaps find it out one day. Mind, I'm not saying Alice is not very handsome, and has not the biggest blue eyes in the world, which she certainly does not make smaller in the way she uses them; or that any one has a finer figure, though some do contrive to move through a room without catching in the harp or upsetting the china. Men, I take it, are the best judges, and they call her perfection."

"They cannot think her more beautiful than she is."

"Perhaps not, dear; and as you are so like as to be constantly mistaken ——"

"Oh, Beck! surely this is not fair," said she, and so imploringly, that the other's voice softened down as she said,

"I never meant to be rude; but my head is gone wild to-day; for, after all, when matters had gone so far, Alice had no right to come in in this fashion; and, as Sally says, 'Why did she never encourage him till she saw his attentions addressed to another?'"

"I never perceived that she gave Mr. Maitland any encouragement. Yes, you may hold up your hands, Beck, and open your eyes very wide; but I repeat what I have said."

"That's a matter of taste, I suppose," said Beck, with some irritation. "There are various sorts of encouragements: as Sally says, 'A look will go further with one than a lock of your hair with another.'"

"But really Sally would seem to have a wisdom like Solomon's on these subjects," said Bella.

"Yes; and what's more, she has acquired it without any risk or peril. She had neither to drive half over a county with a gentleman alone, or pass a good share of a night walking with him in the alleys of a garden."

"What do you mean by this?" asked Bella, angrily.

"Ask Alice; she'll be here, I suppose, this evening; and I'm sure she'll be delighted to satisfy all your sisterly anxiety."

"But one word, Beck—just one word before you go."

"Not a syllable. I have said now what I rigidly promised Sally not to mention when I came in here. You got it out of me in a moment of irritation, and I know well what's in store for me when I confess it—so good-bye."

"But, Beck——"

"Don't make yourself cough, dear; lie down and keep your shawl round you. If I'd thought you were so feverish, I'd not have come over to torment you—good-bye;" and, resisting all Bella's entreaties and prayers, Beck arose and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BESIDE THE HEARTH.

As Tony sat at tea with his mother, Janet rushed in to say that Dr. Stewart had just come home with his daughter, and that she seemed very weak and ill—"daunie-like," as Janet said, "and naething like the braw lassie that left this twa years ago. They had to help her out o' the stage, and if it hadna been that Mrs. Harley had gi'en her a glass o' gooseberry wine, she wad hae fainted." Janet saw it all, for she had gone into Coleraine, and the doctor gave her a seat back with himself and his daughter.

"Poor girl! And is she much changed?" asked Mrs. Butler.

"She's no that changed that I wudna know her," said Janet, "and that's all. She has no colour in her cheeks nor mirth in her een; and instead of her merry laugh, that set everybody off, she's just got a little faint smile that's mair sad than onything else."

"Of course she's weak; she's had a bad fever, and she's now come off a long journey," said Tony, in a sort of rough discontented voice.

"Ay," muttered Janet; "but I doubt she'll never be the same she was."

"To be sure you do," broke in Tony, rudely. "You wouldn't belong to your county here if you didn't look at the blackest side of everything. This end of our island is as cheerful in its population as it is in scenery! and whenever we haven't a death in a cabin, we stroll out to see if there's no sign of a shipwreck on the coast."

"No such a thing, Master Tony. He that made us, made us like ither folk; and we're no worse or better than our neighbours."

"What about the letters, Janet? Did you tell the postmaster that they're very irregular down here?" asked Mrs. Butler.

"I did, ma'am, and he said ye're no warse off than others;

that when the Lord sends floods, and the waters rise, human means is a' that we have; and if the boy couldna swim, the leather bag wi' the letters would hae gi'en him little help."

"And couldn't he have told ye all that without canting——"

"Tony! Tony!" broke in his mother, reprovingly. "This is not the way to bear these things, and I will not hear it."

"Don't be angry, little mother," said he, taking her hand between both his own. "I know how rough and ill-tempered I have grown of late, and though it frets me sorely, I can no more throw it off than I could a fever."

"You'll be soon yourself again, my poor Tony. Your dear father had his days when none dare go near him but myself; and I remember well Sir Archy Cole, who was the General, and commanded in Stirling, saying to me, 'I wish, Mrs. Butler, you would get me the sick return off Wat's table, for he's in one of his tantrums to-day, and the adjutant has not courage to face him.' Many and many a time I laughed to myself over that."

"And did you tell this to my father?"

"No, Tony," said she, with a little dry laugh: "I didn't do that; the Colonel was a good man, and a God-fearing man; but if he had thought that anything was said or done because of certain traits or marks in his own nature, he'd have been little better than a tiger."

Tony pondered, or seemed to ponder, over her words, and sat for some time with his head between his hands. At last he arose hastily, and said, "I think I'll go over to the Burnside and see the doctor, and I'll take him that brace of birds I shot to-day."

"It's a cold night, Tony."

"What of that, mother? If one waits for fine weather in this climate, I'd like to know when he'd go out."

"There you are railing again, Tony, and you must not fall into it as a habit, as people do with profane swearing, so that they cannot utter a word without blaspheming."

"Well, the country is beautiful; the weather is more so; the night is a summer one, and I myself am the most jolly light-hearted young fellow from this to anywhere you like. Will that do, little mother?" and he threw his arm around her, and kissed her fondly. "They've got a colt up there at Sir Arthur's that no one can break; but if you saw him in the paddock, you'd say there was the making of a strong active horse in him; and Wylie, the head groom, says he'd just let him alone, for that some horses 'break themselves.' Do you know, mother I

half suspect I am myself one of these unruly cattle, and the best way would be, never to put a cavesson on me?"

Mrs. Butler had not the vaguest conception of what a cavesson meant, but she said, "I'll not put that nor anything like it on you, Tony; and I'll just believe that the son of a loyal gentleman will do nothing to dishonour a good name."

"That's right; there you've hit it, mother; now we understand each other," cried he, boldly. "I'm to tell the doctor that we expect him and Dolly to dine with us on Monday, ain't I?"

"Monday or Tuesday, or whenever Dolly is well enough to come."

"I was thinking that possibly Skeffy would arrive by Tuesday."

"So he might, Tony, and that would be nice company for him —the doctor and Dolly."

There was something positively comic in the expression of Tony's face as he heard this speech, uttered in all the simplicity of good faith; but he forbore to reply, and, throwing a plaid across his shoulders, gave his habitual little nod of good-bye, and went out. It was a cold starlit night—far colder on the sea-shore than in the sheltered valleys inland. Tony, however, took little heed of this; his thoughts were bent upon whither he was going; while between times his mother's last words would flash across him, and once he actually laughed aloud as he said, "Nice company for Skeffy! Poor mother little knows what company he keeps, and what fine folk he lives with."

The minister's cottage lay at the foot of a little hill, beside a small stream or burn—a lonesome spot enough, and more than usually dreary in the winter season; but as Tony drew nigh, he could make out the mellow glow of a good fire as the gleam, stealing between the ill-closed shutters, fell upon the gravel without. "I suppose," muttered Tony, "she's right glad to be at home again, humble as it is;" and then came another, but not so pleasant, thought—"but why did she come back so suddenly? why did she take this long journey in such a season, and she so weak and ill?" He had his own dark misgivings about this, but he had not the courage to face them, even to himself; and now he crept up to the window and looked in.

A good fire blazed on the hearth, and at one side of it, deep in his old leather chair—the one piece of luxury the room possessed—the minister lay fast asleep, while opposite to him, on a low stool, sat Dolly, her head resting on the arm of a

chair at her side. If her closely-cropped hair and thin wan face gave her a look of exceeding youthfulness, the thin hand that hung down at her side told of suffering and sickness. A book had fallen from her fingers, but her gaze was bent upon the burning log before her—mayhap in unconsciousness; mayhap she thought she read there something that revealed the future.

Lifting the latch—there was no lock, nor was any needed—of the front door, Tony moved stealthily along the little passage, turned the handle of the door, and on tip-toe moved across the room unseen by Dolly, and unheard. As his hand touched the chair on which her head leaned, she looked up and saw him. She did not start nor cry out, but a deep crimson blush covered her face and her temples, and spread over her throat.

"Hush!" said she, in a whisper, as she gave him her hand without rising; "hush! he's very tired and weary; don't awake him."

"I'll not awake him," whispered Tony, as he slid into the chair, still holding her hand, and bending down his head till it leaned against her brow. "And how are you, dear Dolly? are you getting quite strong again?"

"Not yet awhile," said she, with a faint shadow of a smile, "but I suppose I shall soon. It was very kind of you to come over so soon; and it's a severe night, too. How is Mrs. Butler?"

"Well and hearty; she sent you scores of loves—if it was like long ago, I'd have said kisses too," said he, laughing. But Dolly never smiled; a grave sad look indeed came over her, and she turned her head away.

"I was so glad to hear of your coming home, dear Dolly. I can't tell you how dreary the Burnside seems without you. Ay, pale as you are, you make it look bright and cheery at once. It was a sudden thought, wasn't it?"

"I believe it was—but we'll talk of it all another time. Tell me of home. Janet says it's all as I left it: is it so?"

"I suspect it is. What changes did you look for?"

"I scarcely know. I believe when one begins to brood over one's own thoughts, one thinks the world without ought to take on the same dull cold colouring. Haven't you felt that?"

"I don't know—I may; but I'm not much given to brooding. But how comes it that you, the lightest-hearted girl that ever lived—what makes you low-spirited?"

"First of all, Tony, I have been ill; then I have been away

from home; but come, I have not come back to complain and mourn. Tell me of your friends and neighbours. How are all at the Abbey? We'll begin with the grand folk."

"I know little of them; I haven't been there since I saw you last."

"And how is that, Tony? You used to live at the Abbey when I was here long ago."

"Well, it is as I tell you. Except Alice Trafford—and that only in a carriage, to exchange a word as she passed—I have not seen one of the Lyles for several weeks."

"And didn't she reproach you? Didn't she remark on your estrangement?"

"She said something—I forget what," said he, impatiently.

"And what sort of an excuse did you make?"

"I don't remember. I suppose I blundered out something about being engaged or occupied. It was not of much consequence anyhow, for she didn't attach any importance to my absence."

"Don't say that, Tony, for I remember my father saying in one of his letters, that he met Sir Arthur at the fair of Ballymena, and that he said, 'If you should see Tony, doctor, tell him I'm hunting for him everywhere, for I have to buy some young stock. If I do it without Tony Butler's advice, I shall have the whole family upon me.'"

"That's easy enough to understand. I was very useful and they were very kind; but I fancy that each of us got tired of his part."

"They were staunch and good friends to you, Tony. I'm sorry you've given them up," said she, sorrowfully.

"What if it was *they* that gave *me* up? I mean, what if I found the conditions upon which I went there were such as I could not stoop to? Don't ask me any more about it; I have never let a word about it escape my lips, and I am ashamed now to hear myself talk of it."

"Even to *me*, Tony—to sister Dolly?"

"That's true; so you are my dear, dear sister," said he, and he stooped and kissed her forehead; "and you shall hear it all and how it happened."

Tony began his narrative of that passage with Mark Lyle with which our reader is already acquainted, little noticing that to the deep scarlet that at first suffused Dolly's cheeks, a leaden pallor had succeeded, and that she lay with half closed eyes, in utter unconsciousness of what he was saying.

"This, of course," said Tony, as his story flowed on—"this,

of course, was more than I could bear, so I hurried home, not quite clear what was best to be done. I hadn't *you*, Dolly, to consult, you know;" he looked down as he said this, and saw that a great tear lay on her cheek, and that she seemed fainting. "Dolly, my dear—my own dear Dolly," whispered he, "are you ill—are you faint?"

"Lay my head back against the wall," sighed she, in a weak voice, "it's passing off."

"It was this great fire, I suppose," said Tony, as he knelt down beside her, and bathed her temples with some cold water that stood near. "Coming out of the cold air a fire will do that."

"Yes," said she, trying to smile, "it was that."

"I thought so," said he, rather proud of his acuteness. "Let me settle you comfortably here," and he lifted her up in his strong arms, and placed her in the chair where he had been sitting. "Dear me, Dolly, how light you are!"

She shook her head, but gave a smile at the same time of mingled melancholy and sweetness.

"I'd never have believed you could be so light; but you'll see what home and native air will do," added he, quickly, and ashamed of his own want of tact. "My little mother, too, is such a nurse, I'll be sworn that before a month's over you'll be skipping over the rocks, or helping me to launch the coble, like long ago: won't you, Dolly?"

"Go on with what you were telling me," said she, faintly.

"Where was I? I forget where I stopped. Oh, yes; I remember it now. I went home as quick as I could, and I wrote Mark Lyle a letter. I know you'll laugh at the notion of a letter by my hand, but I think I said what I wanted to say. I didn't want to disclaim all that I owed his family; indeed I never felt so deeply the kindness they had shown me as at the moment I was relinquishing it for ever; but I told him that, if he presumed, on the score of that feeling, to treat me like some humble hanger-on of his house, I'd beg to remind him that by birth at least I was fully his equal. That was the substance of it, but I won't say that it was conveyed in the purest and best style."

"What did he reply?"

"Nothing—not one line. I ought to say that I started for England almost immediately after; but he took no notice of me when I came back, and we never met since."

"And his sisters: do you suspect that they know of this letter of yours?"

"I cannot tell, but I suppose not. It's not likely Mark would speak of it."

"How, then, do they regard your abstaining from calling there?"

"As a caprice, I suppose. They always thought me a wayward, uncertain sort of fellow. It's a habit your well-off people have, to look on their poorer friends as queer and odd and eccentric—eh, Dolly?"

"There's some truth in the remark, Tony," said she, smiling; "but I scarcely expected to hear you come out as a moralist."

"That's because, like the rest of the world, you don't estimate me at my true value. I have a great vein of reflection or reflectiveness—which is it, Dolly? but it's the deepest of the two—in me, if people only knew it."

"You have a great vein of kind-heartedness, and you are a good son to a good mother," said she, as a pink blush tinged her cheek, "and I like that better."

It was plain that the praise had touched him, and deeply too, for he drew his hand across his eyes, and his lip trembled as he said, "It was just about that dear mother I wanted to speak to you, Dolly. You know I'm going away?"

"My father told me," said she, with a nod of her head.

"And though, of course, I may manage a short leave now and then to come over and see her, she'll be greatly alone. Now, Dolly, you know how she loves you—how happy she always is when you come over to us. Will you promise me that you'll often do so? You used to think nothing of the walk long ago, and when you get strong and hearty again you'll not think more of it. It would be such a comfort to me, when I am far away, to feel that you were sitting beside her—reading to her, perhaps, or settling those flowers she's so fond of. Ah, Dolly, I'll have that window that looks out on the white rocks in my mind, and you sitting at it, many and many a day, when I'll be hundreds of miles off."

"I love your mother dearly, Tony; she has been like a mother to myself for many a year, and it would be a great happiness to me to be with her; but don't forget, Tony"—and she tried to smile as she spoke—"don't forget that I'll have to go seek my fortune also."

"And aren't you come to live at home now for good?"

She shook her head with a sorrowful meaning, and said, "I'm afraid not, Tony. My dear, dear father does not grow richer as he grows older, and he needs many a little comfort that cannot come of his own providing, and you know he has none but me."

The intense sadness of the last few words were deepened by the swimming eyes and faltering lips of her that uttered them.

"And are you going back to these M'Gruders?"

She shook her head in negative.

"I'm glad of that. I'm sure they were not kind."

"Nay, Tony, they were good folk, but after their own fashion; and they always strove to be just."

"Another word for being cruel. I'd like to know what's to become of any of us in this world if we meet nothing better than justice. But why did you leave them?—I mean leave them for good and all."

She changed colour hastily, and turned her head away, while in a low confused manner she said "There were several reasons. I needn't tell you I wasn't strong, Tony, and strength is the first element of governess life."

"I know how it came about," broke in Tony. "Don't deny it—don't, Dolly. It was all my fault."

"Don't speak so loud," whispered she, cautiously.

"It all came of that night I dined at Richmond. But if he hadn't struck at me——"

"Who struck at you, Tony, my man?" said the old minister, waking up. "He wasna over-gifted with prudence whoever did it, that I maun say; and how is Mrs. Butler and how are you yourself?"

"Bravely, sir, both of us. I've had a long chat with Dolly over the fire, and I fear I must be going now. I've brought you a brace of woodcocks, and a message from my mother about not forgetting to dine with us on Monday."

"I don't know about that, Tony. The lassie yonder is very weak just yet."

"But after a little rest, eh, Dolly? Don't you think you'd be strong enough to stroll over by Monday? Then Tuesday be it."

"We'll bide and see, Tony—we'll bide and see. I'll be able, perhaps, to tell you after meeting to-morrow; not that you're very reg'lar in attendance, Maister Tony; I mean to have a word or two with you about that one of these days."

"All right, sir," said Tony. "If you and Dolly come over to us on Monday, you may put me on the cutty-stool if you like afterwards;" and with that he was gone.

And all this has been my doing, thought Tony, as he wended his way homewards. I have lost to this poor girl the means by which she was earning her own livelihood, and aiding to make

her father's life more comfortable! I must make her tell me how it all came about, and why they made her pay the penalty of my fault. Not very fair that for people so just as they are. "And to think," added he, aloud, after a pause—"to think it was but the other day I was saying to myself, "What can people mean when they talk of this weary world—this life of care and toil and anxiety?"—and already I feel as if I stood on the threshold, and peeped in, and saw it all: but, to be sure, at that time I was cantering along the strand with Alice, and now—and now I am plodding along a dark road, with a hot brain and a heavy heart, to tell me that sorrow is sown broadcast, and none can escape it."

All was still at the cottage when he reached it, and he crept gently to his room, and was soon asleep, forgetting cares and griefs, and only awaking as the strong sunlight fell upon his face and proclaimed the morning.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNWELCOME LETTER.

The doctor had guessed aright. Tony did not present himself at meeting on Sunday. Mrs. Butler, indeed, was there, though the distance was more than a mile, and the day a raw and gusty one, with threatenings of snow in the air.

"Are you coming with me, Tony, to hear the minister? It will be an interesting lecture to day on the character of Ahab," said she, opening his door a few inches.

"I'm afraid not, mother; I'm in for a hard day's work this morning. Better lose Ahab than lose my examination."

Mrs. Butler did not approve of the remark, but she closed the door and went her way, while Tony covered his table with a mass of books, arranged paper and pens, and then filling the bowl of a large Turkish pipe, sat himself down, as he fancied, to work, but in reality to weave thoughts about as profitable and as connected as the thin blue wreaths of smoke that issued from his lips, and in watching whose wayward curls and waftings he continued to pass hours.

I have often suspected—indeed, my experience of life leads me much to the conviction—that for the perfect enjoyment of what is called one's own company, the man of many resources must yield the palm to him of none; and that the mere man of action, whose existence is stir, movement, and adventure, can and does find his occasional hours of solitude more pleasurable than he who brings to his reveries the tormenting doubts and distrusts, the casuistical indecisions and the dreary discontents, that so often come of much reading. Certainly in the former there is no strain—no wear and tear. He is not called on to breast the waves and stem the tide, but to float indolently down the stream without even remarking the scenery that clothes the banks.

Tony, I fancy, was a master of this art; he knew how to follow up any subject in thought till it began to become painful, and then to turn his attention to the sea and some far-off white sail, or to the flickering leaflet of falling snow, tossed

and drifted here and there like some castaway—a never-failing resource. He could follow with his eyes the azure circles of smoke, and wonder which would outstrip the other. To fit him for the life of a "messenger" he had taken down "Cook's Voyages;" but after reading a few pages, he laid down the book to think how far the voyager's experiences could apply to the daily exigences of a Foreign Office official, and to ask himself if he were not in reality laying down too wide and too extensive a foundation for future acquirement. "No," thought he, "I'll not try to be any better or smarter than the rest. I'll just stick to the practical part, and here goes for Ollendorf." Three or four sentences read—he leaned back, and wondered whether he would not rather undertake an excursion on foot to Jerusalem, than set out on an expedition into the French language. As if a whole life could master that bulky dictionary, and transfer its contents to his poor brain! To be sure, Alice knew it; but Alice could learn what she pleased. She learned to skate in three lessons—and how she did it, too! Who ever glided over the ice with such a grace—so easy, so quiet, but with such a perfection of movement! Talk of dancing—it was nothing to it. And couldn't she ride? See her three fields off, and you'd know the ground just by the stride of her horse. Such a hand she had! But who was like Alice?

Ah! there was the boundless prairie, to his thoughts, on which he might ramble for ever; and on that wide swelling savannah, roaming and straying, we shall now leave him, and turn our glance elsewhere.

The morning service of the meeting-house over, Dr. Stewart proposed to walk home with Mrs. Butler. The exposition about Ahab had neither been as full or as able as he had intended, but it was not his fault—at least, only in part his fault; the sum of which consisted in the fact that he had broken through a good rule, which up to that hour had never met with infraction—he had opened a post-letter on the Sabbath-morn. "This comes," said he, plaintively, "of letting the sinfu' things of this warld mingle wi' the holier and higher ones of the warld to come. Corruption is aye stronger than life; and now I maun tell you the whole of it." If we do not strictly follow the good minister, and tell what he had to say in his own words, it is to spare our reader some time on a matter which may not possess the amount of interest to him it had for the person who narrated it. The matter was this: there came that morning a letter from Mrs. M'Gruder to Dr. Stewart—a letter that almost overwhelmed him. The compensation to

humility of station is generally this, that the interests of the humble man are so lowly, so unpretending, and so little obtrusive, that they seldom or never provoke the attention of his more fortunate neighbours. As with the rivulet that can neither float a barque nor turn a mill-wheel none meddles, so with the course of these lowly lives few concern themselves, and they ripple along unheeded. Many and many a time had the old minister hugged this thought to his heart—many and many a time had he felt that there were cares and troubles in this life so proud and so haughty that they disdained the thatched cabin and the humble roof-tree, but loved to push their way through crowds of courtiers up marble stairs, and along gilded corridors. It was then with a perfect shock that he came to learn that even they, in all their lowliness, could claim no exemption from common calamity. The letter began by stating that the writer, before putting pen to paper, had waited till Miss Stewart should have reached her home, so that no anxieties as to her health should be added to the pain the communication might cause. After this louring commencement the epistle went on to state, that the satisfaction which Dolly had at first given by her general good temper and strict attention to her duties, "compensating in a great measure for the defects in her own education and want of aptitude as a teacher," soon ceased to be experienced, as it was found that she was subject to constant intervals of great depression, and even whole days, when she seemed scarcely equal to her duties. The cause was not very long a secret. It was an attachment she had formed to a brother of Mr. M'Gruder's, who, some years younger than himself, had been established in Italy as a partner, and had now come over to England on business.

It was not necessary to say that the writer had never encouraged this sentiment; on the contrary, she had more than remonstrated with her brother-in-law on the score of his attentions, and flatly declared that, if he persisted, she would do her utmost to have the partnership with his brother dissolved, and all future intercourse at an end between them. This led to scenes of a very violent nature, in which she was obliged to own her husband had the cruelty to take his brother's side against her, and avow that Samuel was earning his own bread, and if he liked to share it with an "untochered lassie," it should be far from him, Robert M'Gruder, that any reproach should come—a sarcasm that Mrs. M'Gruder seemed keenly to appreciate.

The agitation caused by these cares, acting on a system

already excited, had brought on a fever to Dolly; and it was only on her convalescence, and while still very weak, that a young man arrived in London and called to see her, who suddenly seemed to influence all her thoughts and plans for the future. Sam, it appeared, had gone back to Italy, relying on Dolly's promise to consult her father and give him a final reply to his offer of marriage. From the day, however, that this stranger had called, Dolly seemed to become more and more indifferent to this project, declaring that her failing health and broken spirits would render her rather a burden than a benefit, and constantly speaking of home, and wishing to be back there. "Though I wished," continued the writer, "that this resolve had come earlier, and that Miss Stewart had returned to her father before she had thrown discord into a united family, I was not going to oppose it, even late as it occurred. It was therefore arranged that she was to go home, ostensibly to recruit and restore herself in her native air; but I, I need hardly tell you, as firmly determined she should never pass this threshold again. Matters were in this state, and Miss Stewart only waiting for a favourable day to begin her journey—an event I looked for with the more impatience as Mr. M'G. and myself could never, I knew, resume our terms of affection so long as she remained in our house—when one night, between one and two o'clock, we were awoke by the sound of feet in the garden under our window. I heard them first, and creeping to the casement, I saw a figure clamber over the railing and make straight for the end of the house where Miss Stewart slept, and immediately begin a sort of low moaning kind of song, evidently a signal. Miss Stewart's window soon opened, and on this I called Mr. M'Gruder. He had barely time to reach the window, when a man's voice from below cried out, 'Come down; are you coming?' On this, Mr. M'Gruder rushed downstairs and into the garden. Two or three loud and angry words succeeded, and then a violent struggle, in which my husband was twice knocked down and severely injured. The man, however, made his escape, but not unrecognized; for your daughter's voice cried out, 'Oh, Tony, I never thought you'd do this,' or, 'Why did you do this?' or some words to that effect.

"The terms on which, through Miss Stewart's behaviour, I have latterly lived with Mr. M'Gruder, gave me no opportunity to learn anything from *him*. Indeed, he never so much as spoke of an incident which confined him two days to his room and five days to the house; but, as if bent on exasperation, redoubled

his kind enquiries about your daughter, who was now, as she said, too ill to leave her room.

"No other course was then open to me than to write the present letter to you and another to my brother-in-law. He, at least, I am determined, shall know something of the young lady with whom he wishes to share his fortune, though I trust that a minister of the Gospel will have no need of any promptings of mine to prevent such a casualty. My last words, on parting with your daughter, were to ask if the man I saw that night was the same who had called to see her, and her reply was, 'Yes, the same.' I will not disguise that she had the grace to cry as she said it.

"That she is never to return here, I need not say. Ay, more than that; no reference to me will be responded to in terms that can serve her. But this is not all. I require that you will send, and send open for my inspection, such a letter to Mr. S. M'Gruder as may finally put an end to any engagement, and declare that, from the circumstances now known to you, you could neither expect, or even desire, that he would make her his wife. Lastly, I demand—and I am in a position to enforce a demand—that you do not communicate with my husband at all in this affair; sufficient unpleasantness and distrust having been already caused by our unhappy relations with your family."

A few moral reflections closed the epistle. They were neither very novel nor very acute, but they embodied the sense of disappointment experienced by one who little thought, in taking a teacher from the manse of a minister, she was incurring a peril as great as if she had sent over to France for the latest refinement in Parisian depravity. "Keep her at home with yourself, Dr. Stewart," wrote she, "unless the time comes when the creature she called Tony may turn up as a respectable man, and be willing to take her." And with a gracefully expressed hope that Dolly's' ill health might prove seasonable for self-examination and correction, she signed herself, "Your compassionate friend, MARTHA M'GRUDER."

"What do you say to that, Mrs. Butler? Did ever you read as much cruelty in pen and ink, I ask you? Did you ever believe that the mother of children could write to a father of his own daughter in such terms as these?"

"I don't know what it means, doctor; it's all confusion to me. Who is Tony? it's not our Tony, surely?"

"I'm not so sure of that, Mrs. Butler. Tony was up in London and he called to see Dolly. You remember that he told in his letter to you how the puir lassie's hair was cut short ——"

"I remember it all, Dr. Stewart; but what has all that to do with all this dreadful scene at night in the garden?" The doctor shook his head mournfully and made no reply. "If you mean Dr. Stewart, that it was my Tony that brought about all these disasters, I tell you I will not—I cannot believe it. It would be better to speak your mind out, sir, than to go on shaking your head. We're not altogether so depraved that our disgrace is beyond words."

"There's nothing for anger here, my dear old friend," said he, calmly, "though maybe there's something for sorrow. When you have spoken to you son, and I to my daughter, we'll see our way better through this thorny path. Good-bye."

"You are not angry with me, doctor?" said she, holding out her hand, while her eyes were dimmed with tears—"you are not angry with me?"

"That I am not," said he grasping her hand warmly in both his own. "We have no other treasures in this world, either of us, than this lad and this lassie, and it's a small fault if we cling to them the more closely. I think I see Tony coming to meet you, so I'll just turn home again." And with another and more affectionate good-bye, they parted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE MANSE.

In no small perturbation of mind was it that Mrs. Butler passed her threshold. That a word should be breathed against her Tony, was something more than she could endure; that he could have deserved it, was more than she could believe. Tony, of whom for years and years she had listened to nothing but flatteries, how clever and ready-witted he was, how bold and fearless, how kind-hearted, and how truthful—ay, how truthful; and how is it then, asked she of herself, that he has told me nothing of all this mischance, and what share he has had in bringing misfortune upon poor Dolly?"

"Is Master Tony at home, Jenny?" said she as she entered.

"Yes; he's reading a letter that has just come wi' the post."

The old lady stopped, with her hand on the handle of the door, to draw a full breath, and regain a calm look; but a merry laugh from Tony, as he sat reading his letter, did more to rally her, though her heart smote her to think how soon she might have to throw a shadow across his sunshine.

"Who's your letter from, Tony?" said she, dryly.

"From Skeffy; he'll be here to-morrow; he's to arrive at Coleraine by six in the morning, and wants me to meet him there."

"And what's the other sealed note in your hand?"

"This?—this is from another man—a fellow you've never heard of; at least, you don't know him."

"And what may be his name, Tony?" asked she, in a still colder tone.

"He's a stranger to you, mother. Skeffy found the note at my hotel, and forwarded it—that's all."

"You weren't wont to have secrets from me, Tony," said she tremulously.

"Nor have I, mother; except it may be some trifling annoyance or worry that I don't care to tease you about. If I had anything heavier on my mind, you may trust me, I'd very soon be out with it."

"But I'm not to hear who this man is?" said she, with a strange pertinacity.

"Of course you are, if you want to hear: his name is there on the corner of his note—Robt. M'Gruder—and here's the inside of it, though I don't think you'll be much the wiser when you've read it."

"It's for yourself to read your own letter, Tony," said she, waving back the note. "I merely asked who was your correspondent."

Tony broke the seal, and ran his eye hastily over the lines. "I'm as glad as if I got a hundred pounds!" cried he. "Listen to this mother:—

"'DEAR SIR,—When I received your note on Monday——'

"But wait a bit, mother; I must tell you the whole story, or you'll not know why he wrote this to me. Do you remember my telling you, just at the back of a letter, that I was carried off to a dinner at Richmond?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, I wish I hadn't gone, that's all. Not that it wasn't jolly, and the fellows very pleasant and full of fun; but, somehow, we all of us took too much wine, or we talked too much, or perhaps both; but we began laying wagers about every imaginable thing, and I made a bet—I'll be hanged if I could tell what it was, but it was something about Dolly Stewart. I believe it was that she was handsomer than another girl. I forgot all about her hair being cut off, and her changed looks. At all events, off we set in a body to M'Gruder's house. It was then about two in the morning, and we all singing, or what we thought was singing, most uproariously. Yes, you may shake your head. I'm ashamed of it now, too, but it was some strange wine—I think it was called Marcobrunner—that completely upset me; and the first thing that really sobered me was seeing that the other fellows ran away, leaving me all alone in the garden, while a short stout man rushed out of the house with a stick to thrash me. I tried to make him hear me, for I wanted to apologize; but he wouldn't listen, and so I gave him a shake. I didn't strike him; but I shook him off, roughly enough perhaps, for he fell, and then I sprang over the gate, and cut off as fast as I could. When I awoke next morning, I remembered it all, and heartily ashamed I was of myself; and I thought that perhaps I ought to go out in person and beg his pardon; but I had no time for that; I wanted to get away by that day's packet, and so I wrote him a few civil lines. I don't remember them exactly, but they were to say that I was very

sorry for it all, and I hoped he'd see the thing as it was—a stupid bit of boyish excess, of which I felt much ashamed; and here's his answer:—

"'DEAR SIR,—When I received your note on Monday morning, I was having leeches to my eye, and couldn't answer it. Yesterday both eyes were closed, and it is only to day that I can see to scratch these lines. If I had had a little more patience on the night I first met you, it would have been better for both of us. As it is, I receive all your explanation as frankly as it is given; and you'll be lucky in life if nobody bears you more ill-will than—Yours truly,

'ROBT. M'GRUDER.

"'If you come up to town again, look in on me at 27, Cannon Street, City. I do not say here, as Mrs. M'G. has not yet forgiven the black eye.'"

"Oh, Tony! my own dear dear true-hearted Tony!" cried his mother, as she flung her arms around him, and hugged him to her heart. "I knew my own dear boy was as loyal as his own high-hearted father."

Tony was exceedingly puzzled to what precise part of his late behaviour he owned all this enthusiastic fondness, and was curious also to know if giving black eyes to Scotchmen had been a trait of his father's.

"And this was all of it, Tony?" asked she, eagerly.

"Don't you think it was quite enough? I'm certain Dolly did; for she knew my voice, and cried out, 'Oh Tony how could you?' or something like that from the window. And that's a thing, mother, has been weighing heavily on my mind ever since. Has this unlucky freak of mine anything to do with Dolly's coming home?"

"We'll find that out later on, Tony; leave that to me," said she, hurriedly; for with all her honesty, she could not bear to throw a cloud over his present happiness, or dash with sorrow the delight he felt at his friend's coming.

"I don't suspect," continued he, thoughtfully, "that I made a very successful impression on that Mrs. M'Gruder the day I called on Dolly; and if she only connected me with this night's exploit, of course it's all up with me."

"Her husband bears you no grudge for it at all, Tony."

"That's clear enough; he's a fine fellow; but if it should turn out, mother, that poor Dolly lost her situation—it was no

great thing, to be sure; but she told me herself, it was hard enough to get as good; and if, I say, it was through me she lost it ——"

"You mustn't give yourself the habit of coining evil, Tony. There are always enough of hard and solid troubles in life without our conjuring up shadows and spectres to frighten us. As I said before, I'll have a talk with Dolly herself, and I'll find out everything."

"Do so, mother; and try and make her come often over here when I'm gone; she'll be very lonely yonder, and you'll be such good company for each other, won't you?"

"I'll do my best, for I love her dearly! She has so many ways, too, that suit an old body like myself. She's so quiet and so gentle, and she'll sit over her work at the window there, and lay it down on her knee to look out over the sea, never saying a word, but smiling a little quiet smile when our eyes meet, as though to say, 'This is very peaceful and happy, and we have no need to tell each other about it, for we can feel it just as deeply.'"

Oh, if she'd only let Alice come to see her and sit with her, thought Tony; how she *would* love her! Alice could be all this, and would too; and then, what a charm she can throw around her with that winning smile! was there ever sunshine like it? And her voice—no music ever thrilled through *me* as that voice did. "I say, mother," cried he aloud, "don't say No; don't refuse her if she begs to come over now and then with a book or a few flowers; don't deny her merely because she's very rich and much courted and flattered. I pledge you my word the flattery has not spoiled her."

"Poor Dolly! it's the first time I ever heard that you were either rich or run after! What's the boy dreaming of, with his eyes staring in his head?"

"I'm thinking that I'll go in to Coleraine to-night, so as to be there when the mail arrives at six in the morning," said Tony, recovering himself, though in considerable confusion. "Skeffy's room is all ready, isn't it?"

"To be sure it is; and very nice and comfortable it looks too;" and as she spoke she arose and went into the little room, on which she and Jenny had expended any amount of care and trouble. "But, Tony dear," she cried out, "what's become of Alice Lyle's picture? I put it over the fireplace myself this morning."

"And I took it down again, mother. Skeffy never knew Alice—never saw her."

"It wasn't for that I put it there; it was because she was a handsome lassie, and it's always a pleasant sight to look upon. Just bring it back again; the room looks nothing without it."

"No, no; leave it in your own room, in which it has always been," said he, almost sternly. "And now about dinner to-morrow; I suppose we'd better make no change, but just have it at three, as we always do."

"Your grand friend will think it's luncheon, Tony."

"He'll learn his mistake when it comes to tea-time; but I'll go and see if there's not a salmon to be had at Carrig-a-Rede before I start; and if I'm lucky, I'll bring you a brace of snipe back with me."

"Do so, Tony; and if Mr. Gregg was to offer you a little seakale, or even some nice fresh celery—eh, dear, he's off, and no minding me! He's a fine true-hearted lad," muttered she, as she reseated herself at her work; "but I wonder what's become of all his high spirits, and the merry ways that he used to have."

Tony was not successful in his pursuit of provender. There was a heavy sea on the shore, and the nets had been taken up; and during his whole walk he never saw a bird. He ate a hurried dinner when he came back, and, taking one more look at Skeffy's room to see it looked as comfortable as he wished it, he set out for Coleraine.

Now though his mind was very full of his coming guest, in part pleasurably and in part with a painful consciousness of his inability to receive him handsomely, his thoughts would wander off at every moment to Dolly Stewart, and to her return home, which he felt convinced was still more or less connected with his own freak. The evening service was going on in the meeting-house as he passed, and he could hear the swell of the voices in the last hymn that preceded the final prayer, and he suddenly bethought him that he would take a turn by the Burnside and have a few minutes' talk with Dolly before her father got back from meeting.

"She is such a true-hearted honest girl," said he to himself "she'll not be able to hide the fact from me; and I will ask her flatly, Is this so? was it not on my account you left the place?"

All was still and quiet at the minister's cottage, and Tony raised the latch and walked through the little passage into the parlour unseen. The parlour, too, was empty. A large old Bible lay open on the table, and beside it a hankerchief, a white one, that he knew to be Dolly's. As he looked at it he bethought him of one Alice had given him once as a keepsake; he had it still.

How different that fragment of gossamer with the frill of rich lace from this homely kerchief! Were they not almost emblems of their owners? and if so, did not his own fortunes rather link him with the humbler than with the higher? With one there might be companionship, with the other what could it be but dependence?

While he was standing thus thinking, two ice-cold hands were laid over his eyes, and he cried out. "Ay, Dolly, those frozen fingers are yours;" and as he removed her hands, he threw one arm round her waist, and, pressing her closely to him, he kissed her:

"Tony, Tony!" said she, reproachfully, while her eyes swam in two heavy tears, and she turned away.

"Come here and sit beside me, Dolly. I want to ask you a question, and we haven't much time, for the doctor will be here presently, an I am so fretted and worried thinking over it that I have nothing left but to come straight to yourself and ask it."

"Well, what is it?" said she calmly.

"But you will be frank, with me, Dolly,—frank and honest, as you always were—won't you?"

"Yes, I think so," said she, slowly.

"Ay, but you must be sure to be frank, Dolly, for it touches me very closely; and to show you that you may, I will tell you a secret, to begin with. Your father has had a letter from that Mrs. M'Gruder, where you lived."

"From her?" said Dolly, growing so suddenly pale that she seemed about to faint; "are you sure of this?"

"My mother saw it; she read part of it; and here's what it implies, that it was all my fault—at least the fault of knowing me—that cost you your place. She tells, not very unfairly, all things considered, about that unlucky night when I came under the windows and had that row with her husband; and then she hints at something, and I'll be hanged if I can make out at what; and if my mother knows, which I suspect she does not, she has not told me: but whatever it be, it is in some way mixed up with your going away; and knowing, my dear Dolly, that you and I can talk to one another as few people can in this world—is it not so? Are you ill, dear—are you faint?"

"No; those are weak turns that come and go."

"Put your head down here on my shoulder, my poor Dolly. How pale you are! and your hands so cold. What is it you say, darling? I can't hear."

Her lips moved, but without a sound, and her eyelids fell

lazily over her eyes, as, pale and scarcely seeming to breathe, she leaned heavily towards him, and fell at last in his arms. There stood against the opposite wall of the room a little horse-hair sofa, a hard and narrow bench, to which he carried her, and, with her head supported by his arm, he knelt down beside her, helpless a nurse as ever gazed on sickness.

"There, you are getting better, my dear, dear Dolly," he said, as a long heavy sigh escaped her. "You will be all right presently, my poor dear."

"Fetch me a little water," said she, faintly.

Tony soon found some, and held it to her lips, wondering the while how it was he had never before thought Dolly beautiful, so regular were the features, so calm the brow, so finely traced the mouth, and the well-rounded chin beneath it. How strange it seemed that the bright eye and the rich colour of health should have served to hide rather than heighten these traits!

"I think I must have fainted, Tony," said she, weakly.

"I believe you did, darling," said he.

"And how was it? Of what were we talking, Tony? Tell me what I was saying to you."

Tony was afraid to refer to what he feared might have had some share in her late seizure; he dreaded to recur to it.

"I think I remember it" said she, slowly, and as if struggling with the difficulty of a mental effort. "But stay; is not that the wicket I heard? Father is coming, Tony;" and as she spoke the heavy foot of the minister was heard on the passage.

"Eh, Tony man, ye here? I'd rather hae seen ye at the evening lecture; but ye're no fond of our form of worship, I believe. The Colonel, your father, I have heard, was a strong Episcopalian."

"I was on my way to Coleraine, doctor, and, I turned off at the mill to see Dolly, and ask her how she was."

"Ye winna stay to supper, then?" said the old man, who, hospitable enough on ordinary occasions, had no wish to see the Sabbath evening's meal invaded by the presence of a guest, even of one so well known as Tony.

Tony muttered some not very connected excuses, while his eyes turned to Dolly, who, still pale and sickly-looking, gave him one little brief nod, as though to say it were better he should go; and the old minister himself stood erect in the middle of the floor, calmly and almost coldly waiting the words "Good-bye."

"Am I to tell mother you'll come to us to-morrow, doctor—you and Dolly?" asked Tony, with his hand on the door.

"It's no on the Sabbath evening we should turn our thoughts to feastin', Master Tony; and none know that better than your worthy mother. I wish you a good evening and a pleasant walk."

"Good-night," said Tony, shutting the door sharply; "and," muttered he to himself, "if you catch *me* crossing your threshold again, Sabbath or week-day——" He stopped, heaved a deep sigh and, drawing his hand across his eyes, said, "my poor dear Dolly, hasn't my precious temper done you mischief enough already that I must let it follow you to your own quiet fireside?"

"And he went his way, with many a vow of self-amendment, and many a kind wish, that was almost a prayer, for the minister and his daughter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEPARTURES.

All was confusion and dismay at Tilney. Bella Lyle's cold turned out to be scarlatina, and Mark and Alice brought back tidings that old Commodore Graham had been seized with a fit, and was seriously, if not dangerously, ill. Of course, the company scattered like an exploded shell. The Graham girls hastened back to their father, while the other guests sought safety in flight, the great struggle now being who should soonest secure post-horses to get away. Like many old people rich in this world's comforts, Mrs. Maxwell had an especial aversion to illness in any shape. It was a topic she never spoke on; and, if she could, would never have mentioned before her. Her intimates understood this thoroughly, and many were the expressions employed to imply that Mr. Such-a-one had a fever, or Mrs. So-and-so was given over by her doctors. As to the fatal result itself, it was always veiled in a sort of decent mystery, as though it would not be perfectly polite to inquire whither the missing friend had retired to.

"Dr. Reede says it is a very mild case of the malady, and that Bella will be up in a day or two, aunt," said Alice.

"Of course she will," replied the old lady, pettishly. "It's just a cold and sore throat—they hadn't that fine name for it long ago, and people got well all the sooner. Is he gone?"

"No; he's talking with Mark in the library; he'll be telling him, I think, about the Commodore."

"Well, don't ask him to stop to dinner; we have sorrow enough without seeing a doctor."

"Oh, here comes Mark! where is Dr. Reede?"

"He's gone over to see Maitland. Fenton came to say that he wished to see him."

"Surely he's not ill," said Alice.

"Oh, dear! what a misfortune that would be!" cried the old lady, with real affliction in her tone; "to think of Mr. Norman Maitland taking ill in one's house."

"Haven't you been over to ask after him, Mark?"

"No. I was waiting till Reedo came back: he's one of those men that can't bear being inquired after; and if it should turn out that he was not ill, he'd not take the anxiety in good part."

"How he has contrived to play the tyrant to you all, I can't imagine," said Alice; "but I can see that every whim and caprice he practises is studied as courtiers study the moods of their masters."

"To be sure, darling, naturally," broke in Mrs. Maxwell, who always misunderstood everybody. "Of course, we are only too happy to indulge him in a whim or fancy; and if the doctor thinks turtle would suit him—turtle is so light; I took it for several weeks for luncheon—we can have it at once. Will you touch the bell, Mark, and I'll tell Raikes to telegraph? Who is it he gets it from?"

Mark pulled the bell, but took no notice of her question. "I wish," muttered he below his breath, "we had never come here. There's Bella now laid up, and here's Maitland. I'm certain he's going away, for I overheard Fenton ask about the distance to Dundalk."

"I suppose we might survive even that misfortune," said she, haughtily.

"And one thing I'll swear to," said Mark, walking the room with impatience—"it's the last Ireland will see of him."

"Poor Ireland! the failure in the potato-crop was bad enough, but this is more than can be endured."

"That's all very fine, Alice, but I'm much mistaken if you are as indifferent as you pretend."

"Mark! what do you mean?" said she, angrily.

"Here's Raikes now, and will some one tell him what it is we want?" said Mrs. Maxwell; but the others were far too deeply engaged in their own whispered controversy now to mind her.

"Captain Lyle will tell you by-and-by, Raikes," said she, gathering up the mass of loose *impedimenta* with which she usually moved from one room to the other, and by which, as they fell at every step, her course could always be tracked. "He'll tell you," added she, moving away. "I think it was caviare, and you are to telegraph for it to Swan and Edgar's—but my head is confused to-day—I'll just go and lie down."

As Mrs. Maxwell left by one door, Alice passed out by another; while Mark, whose temper evinced itself in a flushed cheek and a contracted brow, stood at a window, fretfully tapping the ground with his foot.

"Have you any orders, sir?" asked Raikes.

"Orders! No—stay a moment. Have many gone away this morning?"

"Nearly all, sir. Except your family and Mr. Maitland, there's nobody left but Major Clough, and he's going, I believe, with Dr. Reede."

"You've heard nothing of Mr. Maitland going, have you?"

"Oh, yes, sir! his man sent for post-horses about an hour ago."

Muttering impatiently below his breath, Mark opened the window and passed out upon the lawn. What an unlucky turn had everything taken! It was but a week ago, and his friend Maitland was in high delight with all around him. The country, the scenery, the people were all charming—indeed, in the intervals between the showers, he had a good word to say for the climate. As for Lyle Abbey, he pronounced it the perfection of a country-house; and Mark actually speculated on the time when these opinions of his distinguished friend would have acquired a certain currency, and the judgment of one that none disputed would be recorded of his father's house. And all these successes were now to be reversed by this stupid old sailor's folly—insanity he might call it; for what other word could characterize the pretension that could claim Norman Maitland for a son-in-law?—Maitland, that might have married, if the law would have let him, half a score of infantas and archduchesses, and who had but to choose throughout Europe the alliance that would suit him. And Alice—what could Alice mean by this impertinent tone she was taking towards him? Had the great man's patience given way under it all, and was he really going away, wearied and tired out?

While Mark thus doubted and reasoned and questioned, Maitland was seated at his breakfast at one side of the fire, while Dr. Reede confronted him at the other.

Though Maitland had sent a message to say he wished to see the doctor, he only gave him now a divided attention, being deeply engaged, even as he talked, in deciphering a telegram which had just reached him, and which was only intelligible through a key to the cipher.

"So then, doctor, it is simply the return of an old attack—a thing to be expected, in fact, at his time of life?"

"Precisely, sir. He had one last autumn twelve month, brought on by a fit of passion. The old Commodore gives way rather to temper."

"Ah! gives way, does he?" muttered Maitland, while he

mumbled below his breath, "'seventeen thousand and four D + X, and a gamba'—a very large blood-letting. By the way, doctor, is not bleeding—bleeding largely—a critical remedy with a man of seventy-six or seven?"

"Very much so, indeed, sir; and if you observe, I only applied some leeches to the *nuchæ*. You misapprehended me in thinking I took blood from him freely."

"Oh yes, very true," said Maitland, recovering himself. "I have no doubt you treated him with great judgment. It is a case, too, for much caution. Forty-seven and two G's," and he hastily turned over the leaves of his little book, muttering continually, "and two G's, forty-six, forty-seven, with two B's, two F's. Ah! here it is. Shivering attacks are dangerous—are they—in these cases?"

"In which cases?" asked the doctor, for his shrewd intelligence at once perceived the double object which Maitland was trying to contemplate.

"In a word, then," continued Maitland, not heeding the doctor's question, but bending his gaze fixedly on the piece of paper before him, scrawled over and blotted by his own hand—"in a word, then, a man of seventy seized with paralysis, and, though partially rallied by bleeding, attacked with shivering, is in a very critical state? But how long might he live in that way?"

"We are not now speaking of Commodore Graham, I apprehend?" asked the Doctor, slyly.

"No; I am simply putting a case—a possible case. Doctors, I know, are not fond of these imagined emergencies; lawyers like them."

"Doctors dislike them," broke in Reede, "because they are never given to them in any completeness—every important sign of pulse and tongue and temperature omitted——"

"Of course you are right," said Maitland, crumpling up the telegram and the other papers; "and now for the Commodore. You are not apprehensive of anything serious, I hope?"

"It's an anxious case, sir—a very anxious case; he's eighty-four."

"Eighty-four!" repeated Maitland, to whom the words conveyed a considerable significance.

"Eighty-four!" repeated the other once more. "No one would suspect it. Why, Sally Graham is the same age as my wife; they were at school together."

Too polite to push a question which involved a double-

shotted answer, Maitland merely said "Indeed!" and, after a slight pause, added—"You said, I think, that the road to Dundalk led past Commodore Graham's cottage?"

"By the very gate."

"May I offer you a seat with me? I am going that way. I have received news which calls me suddenly to England."

"I thank you much, but I have some visits yet to make before I return to Port-Graham. I promised to stop the night there."

Having charged the doctor to convey to the Commodore's daughters his sincere regret for their father's illness, and his no less sincere hope of a speedy recovery, Maitland endeavoured, in recognition of a preliminary question or two about himself, to press the acceptance of a fee; but the doctor, armed with that self-respect and tact his profession so eminently upholds, refused to accept it, and took his leave, perhaps well requited in having seen and spoken with the great Mr. Norman Maitland of whom half the country round were daily talking.

"Mr. Maitland is not ill, I hope?" said Alice, as she met the doctor on his way through the garden.

"No, Mrs. Trafford; I have been making a friendly call—no more," said the doctor, rather vain that he could thus designate his visit; and with a few words of advice about her sister, he went his way. Alice, meanwhile, saw that Maitland had observed her from his window, and rightly guessed that he would soon be in search of her.

With that feminine instinct that never deceives in such cases, she determined that whatever was to pass between them should be undisturbed. She selected a most unfrequented path, bordered on one side by the high laurel-hedge, and on the other by a little rivulet, beyond which lay some rich meadows, backed in the distance by a thick plantation.

She had not gone far when she heard a short quick footstep behind her, and in a few minutes Maitland was at her side. "You forgot to liberate me," said he, "so I had to break my arrest."

"*Signor mio*, you must forgive me—we have had such a morning of confusion and trouble: first Bella ill—not seriously, but confined to bed; and then this poor old Commodore—the doctor has told you all about it; and, last of all, Mark storming about the house, and angry with every one for having caught cold or a fever, and so disgusted (the great) Mr. Maitland that he is actually hurrying away with a vow to heaven never more to put foot in Ireland."

"Be a little serious, and tell me of your mission this morning," said he, gravely.

"Three words will do it. We reached Port-Graham just as the doctor arrived there. The Commodore, it seemed, got home all safe by about four o'clock in the morning; and, instead of going to bed, ordered a fire in his dressing-room, and a bottle of mulled port; with which aids to comfort he sat down to write. It would not appear, however, that he had got far in his correspondence, for at six, when his man entered, he found but two lines, and his master, as he thought, fast asleep; but which proved to be a fit of some kind, for he was perfectly insensible. He rallied, however, and recognized his servant, and asked for the girls. And now Dr. Reede thinks that the danger has in a great measure passed off, and that all will go well."

"It is most unhappy—most unhappy," muttered Maitland. "I am sincerely sorry for it all."

"Of course you are, though perhaps not really to blame—at least, not blamable in a high degree."

"Not in any degree, Mrs. Trafford."

"That must be a matter of opinion. At all events, your secret is safe, for the old man has totally forgotten all that occurred last night between you; and lest any clue to it should remain, I carried away the beginning of the letter he was writing. Here it is."

"How thoughtfully done!" said he, as he took the paper and read aloud, '"Dear Triphook, come over and help me to a shot at a rascal'—not civil, certainly—'at a rascal; that because he calls himself——' It was well he got no further," added he with a faint smile.

"A good, bold hand it is too for such an old man. I declare, Mr. Maitland, I think your usual luck must have befriended you here. The fingers that held the pen so steadily might have been just as unshaken with the pistol."

There was something so provocative in her tone that Maitland detected the speech at once, and became curious to trace it to a cause. At this sally, however, he only smiled in silence.

"I tried to persuade Mark to drive over and see Tony Butler," continued she, "but he wouldn't consent: in fact, a general impulse to be disobliging would appear to have seized on the world just now. Don't you think so?"

"By the way, I forgot to tell you that your protégé Butler, refuses to accept my offer. I got three lines from him, very dry

and concise, saying 'no' to me. Of course I trust to your discretion never to disclose the negotiation in any way. I myself shall never speak of it; indeed, I am very little given to doing civil things, and even less accustomed to finding them ill received, so that my secrecy is insured."

"He ought not to have refused," said she, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps not."

"He ought certainly to have given the matter more consideration. I wish I could have been consulted by him. Is it too late yet?"

"I suspect it is," said he, dryly. "First of all, as I told you, I am little in the habit of meeting a repulse; and, secondly, there is no time to renew the negotiation. I must leave this to-day."

"To-day?"

"Within an hour," added he, looking at his watch; "I must manage to reach Dublin in time to catch the mail-packet to-morrow morning."

"This is very sudden, this determination."

"Yes, I am called away by tidings I received a while ago—tidings of, to me, the deepest importance."

"Mark will be extremely sorry," said she, in a low tone.

"Not sorrier than I am," said he, despondently.

"We all counted on your coming back with us to the Abbey; and it was only a while ago Bella begged that we should wait here for a day or two, that we might return together, a family party."

"What a flattery there is in the phrase!" said he, with deep feeling.

"You don't know," continued she, "what a favourite you are with my mother. I dare not trust myself to repeat how she speaks of you."

"Why will you multiply my regrets, Mrs. Trafford? why will you make my parting so very, very painful?"

"Because I prefer that you should stay; because I speak in the name of a whole house who will be afflicted at your going."

"You have told me of all save one," said he, in a voice of deepest feeling; "I want to learn what she thinks."

"She thinks that if Mr. Maitland's good-nature be only on a par with his other qualities, he would sooner face the tiresomeness of a stupid house than make the owners of it feel that they bored him."

"She does not think anything of the kind," said he, with a

peculiar smile. "She knows that there is no question of good-nature or of boredom in the matter at all; but there is something at stake far more touching than either." He waited to see if she would speak, but as she was silent he went on—"I will be honest, if you will not. I am not going away of my free will. I have been called by a telegram this morning to the Continent; the matter is so pressing that—shall I confess it?—if this stupid meeting with the Commodore had been arranged, I should have been a defaulter. Yes, I'd have made, I don't well know what explanation to account for my absence. I can imagine what comments would have been passed upon my conduct. I feel very painfully, too, for the part I should have left to such of my friends here as would defend me, and yet have not a fragment to guide their defence. And still, with all these before me, I repeat, I would have gone away, so imminent is the case that calls me, and so much is the matter one that involves the whole future of my life. And now," said he, while his voice became fuller and bolder, "that I have told you this, I am ready to tell you more, and to say that at one word of yours—one little word—I'll remain."

"And what may that word be?" said she, quietly; for while he was speaking she had been preparing herself for some such issue.

"I need not tell you," said he, gravely.

"Supposing, then, that I guess it—I am not sure that I do—but suppose that—and could it not be just as well said by another—by Bella, for instance?"

"You know it could not. This is only fencing, for you know it could not."

"You mean, in fact, that I should say, 'don't go?'"

"I do."

"Well, I'm willing enough to say so, if my words are not to convey more than I intend by them."

"I'll risk even that," said he, quickly. "Put your name to the bond, and we'll let lawyers declare what it is worth after."

"You frighten me, Mr. Maitland," said she, and her tone showed that now at least she was sincere.

"Listen to me for one moment, Alice," said he, taking her hand as he walked beside her. "You are fully as much the mistress of your fate as I am master of mine. You may consult, but you need not obey. Had it been otherwise, I never would have dared on a hardihood that would probably have wrecked my hopes. It is just as likely I never could satisfy the friends

about you on the score of my fortune—my means—my station, and so on. It is possible, too, that scandal which makes free with better men, may not have spared *me*, and that they who would have the right to advise you might say, 'beware of that dreadful man.' I repeat, this is an ordeal my pride would feel it hard to pass through; and so I come to you, in all frankness, and declare I love you. To you—you alone—I will give every guarantee that a man may give of his honour and honesty. I will tell all my past, and so much as I mean for the future; and in return, I only ask for time—nothing but time, Alice. I am not asking you for any pledge, simply that you will give me—what you would not have refused a mere acquaintance—the happiness of seeing you daily; and if—if, I say, you yourself should not deem the hand and the love I offer beneath you—if you should be satisfied with the claims of him who would share his fortune with you—that then—not till then—others should hear of it. Is this too much for me to ask, or you to give, Alice?"

"Even now I do not know what you ask of me."

"First of all, that you bid me stay."

"It is but this moment you have declared to me that what calls you away is of the very last importance to you in life."

"The last but one, Alice—the last is here," and he kissed her hand as he spoke, but still with an air so deferent that she could not resent it.

"I cannot consent that it shall be so," said she, with energy. "It is true I am my own mistress, and there is but the greater reason why I should be more cautious. We are almost strangers to each other. All the flattery of your professions—and of course, I feel it as flattery—does not blind me to the fact that I scarcely know you at all."

"Why not consent to know me more?" asked he, almost imploringly.

"I agree, if no pledge is to accompany my consent."

"Is not this a somewhat hard condition?" said he, with a voice of passionate meaning. "You bid me, in one word, place all that I have of hope on the issue—not even on that, but simply for leave to play the game. Is this generous, Alice—is it even just?"

"You bewilder me with all these subtleties, and I might ask if this were either just or generous; but at least, I will be frank. I like you very well. I think it not at all impossible that I might like you better; but even after that, Mr. Maitland, there would

be a long stage to travel to that degree of regard which you profess to desire from me. Do I make myself understood?"

"Too well for me and my hopes!" said he, despondingly. "You are able, however, to impose hard conditions."

"I impose none, sir. Do not mistake me."

"You leave none others open to me, at least, and I accept them. To give me even that faint chance of success, however, I must leave this to-day. Is it not better I should?"

"I really cannot advise," said she, with a well-assumed coldness.

"Even contingently, Mrs. Trafford will not involve herself in my fortunes," said he, half haughtily. "Well, my journey to Ireland, amongst other benefits, has taught me a lesson that all my wanderings never imparted. I have at last learned something of humility. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Mr. Maitland," said she, with calm, but evidently not without effort.

He stooped and kissed her hand, held it for a moment or two in his own, and with a very faint 'Good-bye,' turned away and left her. He turned suddenly around after a few paces, and came back. "May I ask one question, Alice, before I go?"

"I don't know whether I shall answer it," said she, with a faint smile.

"I cannot afford to add jealousy to my other torments. Tell me, then——"

"Take care, sir, take care; your question may cost you more than you think of."

"Good-bye—good-bye," said he sadly, and departed. "Are the horses ready, Fenton?" asked he, as his servant came to meet him.

"Yes, sir; and Captain Lyle has been looking for you all over the garden."

"He's going—he's off, Bella," said Alice, as she sat down beside her sister's bed, throwing her bonnet carelessly down at her feet.

"Who is going?—who is off?" asked Bella, eagerly.

"Of course," continued Alice, following up her own thoughts, "to say 'stay' means more than I like to be pledged to—I couldn't do it."

"Poor Tony!—give him my love, Alice, and tell him I shall often think of him—as often as ever I think of bygone days and all their happiness."

"And why must it be Tony that I spoke of?" said Alice, rising, while a deep crimson flush covered her face and brow. "I think Master Tony has shown us latterly that he has forgotten the long ago, and has no wish to connect us with thoughts of the future."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONSPIRATORS.

In one of those low-ceilinged apartments of a Parisian *hôtel* which modern luxury seems peculiarly to affect, decorating the walls with the richest hangings, and gathering together promiscuously objects of art and vertu, along with what can minister to voluptuous ease, Maitland and Caffarelli were now seated. They had dined, and their coffee stood before them on a table spread with a costly dessert and several bottles, whose length of neck and colour indicated choice liquor.

They lounged in the easiest of chairs in the easiest of attitudes, and, as they puffed their havannahs, did not ill-represent in tableau the luxurious self-indulgence of the age we live in. For let us talk as we will of progress and mental activity, be as boastful as we may about the march of science and discovery, in what are we so really conspicuous as in the inventions that multiply ease, and bring the means of indulgence within the reach of even moderate fortune?

As the wood fire crackled and flared on the ample hearth, a heavy plash of hail struck the window, and threatened almost to smash it.

"What a night!" said Maitland, drawing closer to the blaze. "I say, *Carlo mio*, it's somewhat cosier to sit in this fashion than be toddling over the Mont Cenis in a shabby old sledge, and listening to the discussion whether you are to spend the night in the 'Refuge No. One, or No. Two.'"

"Yes," said Caffarelli, "it must have been a great relief to you to have got my telegram in Dublin, and to know that you need not cross the Alps."

"If I could only have been certain that I understood it aright, I'd have gone straight back to the north from whence I came; but there was a word that puzzled me—the word '*calamità*.' Now we have not yet arrived at the excellence of accenting foreign words in our telegraph offices; and as your most amiable and philosophical of all nations has but the same combination of letters to express an attraction and an affliction

I was sorely puzzled to make out whether you wrote with or without an accent on the last syllable. It made all the difference in the world whether you say events are a 'loadstone' or a 'misfortune.' I gave half an hour to the study of the passage, and then came on."

"*Per Bacco!* I never thought of that; but what, under any circumstances, would have induced you to go back again?"

"I fell in love!"

Caffarelli pushed the lamp aside to have a better view of his friend, and then laughed long and heartily. "Maso Arretini used often to say, 'Maitland will die a monk;' and I begin now to believe it is quite possible."

"Maso was a fool for his prediction. Had I meant to be a monk, I'd have taken to the cowl when I had youth and vigour and dash in me, the qualities a man ought to bring to a new career. Ha! what is there so strange in the fact that I should fall in love?"

"Don't ask as if you were offended with me, and I'll try and tell you."

"I am calm; go on."

"First of all, Maitland—no easy conquest would satisfy your vanity, and you'd never have patience to pursue a difficult one. Again, the objects that really have an attraction for you—such as Ambition and Power—have the same fascination for you that high play has for a gambler. You do not admit nor understand any other; and, last of all, one is nothing if not frank in these cases—you'd never believe any woman was lovely enough, clever enough, or graceful enough to be worthy of Norman Maitland."

"The candour has been perfect. I'll try and imitate it," said Maitland, filling his glass slowly, and slightly wetting his lips. "All you have just said, Carlo, would be unimpeachable if all women were your countrywomen, and if love were what it is understood to be in an Italian city; but there are such things in this dreary land of fog and snow-drift as women who do not believe intrigue to be the chief object of human existence, who have fully as much self-respect as they have coquetry, and who would regard no addresses so offensive as those that would reduce them to the level of a class with which they would not admit companionship."

"Bastions of virtue that I never ask to lay siege to!" broke out the other, laughing.

"Don't believe it, Carlo. You'd like the campaign well, if

you only knew how to conduct it. Why, it's not more than a week ago I quitted a country-house where there were more really pretty women than you could number in the crowd of one of your ball-rooms on either Arno or Tiber."

"And, in the name of Heaven, why didn't you bring over one of them at least, to strike us with wonderment and devotion?"

"Because I would not bring envy, malice, and jealousy to all south of the Alps; because I would not turn all your heads, or torment your hearts; and, lastly, because—she wouldn't come. No, Carlo, she wouldn't come."

"And you really asked her?"

"Yes. At first I made the lamentable blunder of addressing her as I should one of your own dark-skinned damsels, but the repulse I met taught me better. I next tried the serious line, but I failed there also; not hopelessly, however—at least, not so hopelessly as to deter me from another attempt. Yes, yes; I understand your smile, and I know your theory—there never was a bunch of grapes yet that was worth going on tip-toe to gather."

"Not that, but there are scores within reach quite as good as one cares for," said Caffarelli, laughing. "What are you thinking of?" asked he, after a pause.

"I was thinking what possible hope there was for a nation of twenty millions of men, with temperament like yours—fellows so ingrained in indolence that the first element they weigh in every enterprise was, how little trouble it was to cost them."

"I declare," said the Italian, with more show of energy, "I'd hold life as cheaply as yourself if I had to live in your country—breathe only fogs, and inhale nothing pleasanter than coal-smoke."

"It is true," said Maitland, gravely, "the English have not got climate—they have only weather; but who is to say if out of the vicissitudes of our skies we do not derive that rare activity which makes us profit by every favourable emergency?"

"To do every conceivable thing but one."

"And what is that one?"

"Enjoy yourselves! Oh, *caro amico*, you do with regard to your pleasures what you do with your music—you steal a little from the Continent, and always spoil it in the adaptation."

Maitland sipped his wine in half-sullen silence for some minutes, and then said, "you think then, really, we ought to be at Naples?"

"I am sure of it. Baretti—do you forget Baretti? he had the wine-shop at the end of the Contrada St. Lucia."

"I remember him as a Camorrista."

"The same; he is here now. He tells me that the Court is so completely in the hands of the Queen that they will not hear of any danger; that they laugh every time Cavour is mentioned; and now that both France and England have withdrawn their envoys, the King says openly, 'It is a pleasure to drive out on the Chiaja when one knows they'll not meet a French gendarme or an English detective.'"

"And what does Baretti say of popular feeling?"

"He says the people would like to do something, though nobody seems to know what it ought to be. They thought that Milano's attempt t'other day was clever, and they think it mightn't be bad to blow up the Emperor, or perhaps the Pope, or both; but he also says that the Camorra are open to reason, and that Victor Emmanuel and Cavour are as legitimate food for an explosive shell as the others; and, in fact, any convulsion that will smash the shutters and lead to pillage must be good."

"You think Baretti can be depended on?"

"I know he can. He has been Capo Camorrista eight years in one of the vilest quarters of Naples; and if there were a suspicion of him, he'd have been stabbed long ago."

"And what is he doing here?"

"He came here to see whether anything could be done about assassinating the Emperor."

"I'd not have seen him, Carlo. It was most unwise to have spoken with him."

"What would you have?" said the other, with a shrug of his shoulders. "He come to set this clock to rights—it plays some half-dozen airs from Mercadante and Verdi—and he knows how to arrange them. He goes every morning to the Tuileries, to Moquard, the Emperor's secretary: he, too, has an Italian musical clock, and he likes to chat with Baretti."

"I distrust these fellows greatly."

"That is so English!" said Caffarelli; "but we Italians have a finer instinct for knavery, just as we have a finer ear for music; and as we detect a false note, so we smell a treachery, where you John Bulls would neither suspect one or the other. Baretti sees the Prince Napoleon, too, almost every day, and with Pietri, he is like a brother."

"But we can have no dealings with a fellow that harbours such designs."

"*Caro amico*, don't you know by this time that no Italian of the class of this fellow ever imagines any other disentanglement in a political question than by the stiletto? It is you, or I, or somebody else, must, as they phrase it, 'pay with his skin.' Fortunately for the world, there is more talk than action in all this; but if you were to oppose it, and say, 'None of this,' you'd only be the first victim. We put the knife in politics just as the Spanish put garlic in cookery: we don't know any other seasoning, and it has always agreed with our digestion."

"Can Giacomo come in to wind up the clock, Eccellenza?" said Caffarelli's servant, entering at the moment; and as the Count nodded an assent, a fat, large, bright-eyed man of about forty entered, with a mellow frank countenance, and an air of happy joyous contentment that might have sat admirably on a well-to-do-farmer."

"Come over and have a glass of wine, Giacomo," said the Count, filling a large glass to the brim with Burgundy; and the Italian bowed with an air of easy politeness first to the Count and next to Maitland, and then after slightly tasting the liquor, retired a little distance from the table, glass in hand.

"My friend here," said the Count, with a motion of his hand towards Maitland, "is one of ourselves, Giacomo, and you may speak freely before him."

"I have seen the noble signor before," said Giacomo, bowing respectfully, "at Naples, with His Royal Highness the Count of Syracuse."

"The fellow never forgets a face; nobody escapes him," muttered Caffarelli; while he added, aloud, "Well, there are few honester patriots in Italy than the Count of Syracuse."

Giacomo smiled, and showed a range of white teeth, with a pleasant air of acquiescence.

"And what is stirring?—what news have you for us, Giacomo?" asked Caffarelli.

"Nothing, Eccellenza—positively nothing. The French seem rather to be growing tired of us Italians, and begin to ask, 'What, in the name of wonder, do we really want?' and even his Majesty the Emperor t'other day said to one of ours, 'Don't be importunate.'"

"And will you tell me that the Emperor would admit to his presence and speak with fellows banded in a plot against his life?" asked Maitland, contemptuously.

"Does the noble signor know that the Emperor was a Carbo-

naro once, and that he never forgets it? Does the noble signor know that there has not been one plot against his life—not one —of which he has not been duly apprised and warned?"

"If I understand you aright, Master Giacomo, then, it is that these alleged schemes of assassination are simply plots to deliver up to the Emperor the two or three amongst you who may be sincere in their blood-thirstiness. Is that so?"

Far from seeming offended at the tone or the tenor of this speech, Giacomo smiled good-naturedly, and said, "I perceive that the noble signor is not well informed either as to our objects or our organization; nor does he appear to know, as your Excellency knows, that all secret societies have a certain common brotherhood."

"What! does he mean when opposed to each other?"

"He does, and he is right, Maitland. As bankers have their changing-houses, these fellows have their appointed places of meeting; and you might see a Jesuit in talk with a Garibaldian, and a wild revolutionist with one of the Pope's household."

"The real pressure of these fellows," whispered the Count, still lower, "is menace! Menace it was brought about the war with Austria, and it remains to be seen if menace cannot undo its consequences. Killing a king is trying an unknown remedy; threatening to kill him is coercing his policy. And what are you about just now, Giacomo?" added he, louder.

"Little jobs here and there, signor, as I get them; but this morning, as I was mending a small organ at the Duc de Broglie's, an agent of the police called to say I had better leave Paris."

"And when?"

"To-night, sir. I leave by the midnight mail for Lyons, and shall be in Turin by Saturday."

"And will the authorities take his word, and suffer him to go his road without surveillance?" whispered Maitland.

"*Si, signor!*" interposed Giacomo, whose quick Italian ear had caught the question. "I won't say that they'll not telegraph down the whole line, and that at every station a due report will not be made of me; but I am prepared for that, and I take good care not even to ask a light for my cigar from any one who does not wear a French uniform."

"If I had authority here, Master Giacomo," said Maitland, "it's not you, nor fellows like you, I'd set at liberty."

"And the noble signor would make a great mistake, that's all."

"Why so?"

"It would be like destroying the telegragh wires because one received an unpleasant despatch," said Giacomo, with a grin.

"The fellow avows, then, that he is a spy, and betrays his fellows," whispered Maitland.

"I'd be very sorry to tell him so, or hear you tell him so," whispered the Count, with a laugh.

"Well, Giacomo," added he, aloud, "I'll not detain you longer. We shall probably be on t'other side of the Alps ourselves in a few days, and shall meet again. A pleasant journey and a safe one to you;" he adroitly slipped some napoleons into the man's hand as he spoke. "*Tanti saluti* to all our friends, Giacomo," said he, waving his hand in adieu; and Giacomo seized it and kissed it twice with an almost rapturous devotion, and withdrew.

"Well," cried Maitland, with an irritable vibration in his tone, "this is clear and clean beyond me. What can you or I have in common with a fellow of this stamp? or supposing that we could have anything, how should we trust him?"

"Do you imagine that the nobles will ever sustain the monarchy, my dear Maitland? or in what country have you ever found that the highest in class were freest of their blood? It is Giacomo, and the men like him, who defend kings to day that they may menace them to-morrow. These fellows know well that with what is called a constitutional government and a parliament the king's life signifies next to nothing, and their own trade is worthless. They might as well shoot a President of the Court of Cassation! Besides, if we do not treat with these men, the others will. Take my word for it, our king is wiser than either of us, and he never despised the Camorra. But I know what your afraid of, Maitland," said he, laughing—"what you and all your countrymen tremble before—that precious thing you call public opinion, and your *Times* newspaper! There's the whole of it. To be arraigned as a regicide, and called the companion of this, that, or t'other creature, who was or ought to have been guillotined, is too great a shock for your Anglican respectability; and really I had fancied you were Italian enough to take a different view of this."

Maitland leaned his head on his hand, and seemed to muse for some minutes. "Do you know, Carlo," said he at last, "I don't think I'm made for this sort of thing. This fraternizing with scoundrels—for scoundrels they are—is a rude lesson. This waiting for the *mot d'ordre* from a set of fellows who work in the dark, is not to my humour. I had hoped for a fair stand-up fight, where the best man should win; and what do we see

before us? Not the cause of a throne defended by the men who are loyal to their king, but a vast lottery, out of which any adventurer is to draw the prize. So far as I can see it, we are to go into a revolution to secure a monarchy."

Caffarelli leaned across the table and filled Maitland's glass to the brim, and then replenished his own.

"*Caro mio*," said he, coaxingly, "don't brood and despond in this fashion, but tell me about this charming Irish beauty. Is she a brunette?"

"No; fair as a lily, but not like the blonde damsels you have so often seen, with a certain timidity of look that tells of weak and uncertain purpose. She might by her air and beauty be a queen."

"And her name?"

"Alice—Alicia, some call it."

"Alice is better. And how came she to be a widow so very young? What is her story?"

"I know nothing of it; how should I? I could tell nothing of my own," said Maitland, sternly.

"Rich as well as beautiful—what a prize, Maitland! I can scarcely imagine why you hesitate about securing it."

Maitland gave a scornful laugh, and with a voice of bitterness said, "Certainly my pretensions are great. I have fortune—station—family—name—and rank to offer her. Can you not remind me, Carlo, of some other of my immense advantages?"

"I know this much," said the other, doggedly, "that I never saw you fail in anything you ever attempted."

"I had the trick of success once," said Maitland, sorrowfully, "but I seem to have lost it. But, after all, what would success do for me here, but stamp me as an adventurer?"

"You did not argue in that fashion two years ago, when you were going to marry a Spanish princess, and the half-sister of a queen."

"Well, I have never regretted that I broke off the match. It estranged me, of course, from *him;* and indeed he has never forgiven me."

"He might, however, now, if he saw that you could establish your fortunes so favourably—don't you think so?"

"No, Carlo. It is all for rank and title, not for money, that he cares! His whole game in life was played for the Peerage. He wanted to be 'My Lord;' and though repeatedly led to believe he was to have the title, the Minister put off, and put off, and at last fell from power without keeping his pledge. Now in this Spanish business he bargained that I was to be a Duke—a

Grandee of Spain. The Queen declared it impossible. Muños himself was refused. The dukedom, however, I could have. With the glitter of that ducal coronet before his eyes, he paid three hundred thousand francs I lost at the Jockey Club in Paris, and he merely said, 'Your luck in love has been somewhat costly—don't play such high stakes again.'"

"He is *très grand seigneur!*" said the Italian, with a voice of intense admiration and respect.

"Yes," said Maitland; "in every case where mere money enters, he is princely. I never met a man who thought less of his gold. The strange thing is, that it is his ambition which exhibits him so small!"

"Adagio, adagio, caro mio!" cried Caffarelli, laughing. "I see where you are bound for now. You are going to tell me as you have some score of times, that to all English estimation our foreign titles are sheer nonsense; that our pauper counts and beggarly dukes are laughing matter for even your Manchester folk; and that in your police code baron and blackleg are synonyms. Now spare me all this, *caro* Maitland, for I know it by heart."

"If one must say such impertinences, it is well to say them to a cardinal's nephew."

The slight flush of temper in the Italian's cheek gave way at once, and he asked good-humouredly as he said: "Better say them to me, certainly, than to my uncle. But, to be practical, if he does attach so much importance to rank and title, why do you not take that countship of Amalfi the King offered you six months ago, and which to this day he is in doubt whether you have accepted or refused?"

"How do you know that?" asked Maitland, eagerly.

"I know it in this wise; that when his Majesty mentioned your name t'other day to Filangieri, he said, 'The Chevalier Maitland or Count of Amalfi—I don't know by which name he likes to call himself.'"

"Are you sure of this?"

"I heard it; I was present when he said it."

"If I did not accept when it was offered, the reason was this: I thought that the first time I wrote myself Count of Amalfi, old Santarelli would summon me before him to show birth and parentage, and fifty other particulars which I could have no wish to see inquired after; and as the title of Amalfi was one once borne by a cadet of the royal family, he'd have been all the more exacting in his perquisitions before inscribing my name in that precious volume he calls the 'Libro d'Oro.' If, however, you

tell me that the King considers that I have accepted the rank, it gives the matter another aspect."

"I suspect poor old Santarelli has very little heart for heraldry just now. He has got a notion that the first man the Revolutionists will hang will be himself, representing, as he does, all the privileges of feudalism."

"There is one way to do it if it could be managed," said Maitland, pondering. "Three lines in the King's hand, addressing me 'The Chevalier Maitland, Count of Amalfi!' With these I'd defy all the heralds that ever carried a painted coat in a procession."

"If that be all, I'll promise you it. I am writing to Filangieri to-morrow. Let me have some details of what men you have recruited and what services you have rendered, briefly, not formally; and I'll say, 'If our master would vouchsafe in his own hand a line, a word even, to the Count of Amalfi, it would be a recompense he would not exchange for millions.' I'll say 'that the letter could be sent to Ludolf at Turin, where we shall probably be in a week or two.'"

"And do you think the King will accede?"

"Of course he will. We are not asking for a pension, or leave to shoot at Caserta. The thing is the same as done. Kings like a cheap road out of their indebtedness as well as humbler people. If not, they would never have invented crosses and grand cordons."

"Now, let us concoct the thing regularly," said Maitland, pushing the decanters from before him, as though, by a gesture, to show that he had turned from all conviviality to serious considerations. "You," continued he, "will first of all write to Filangieri."

"Yes. I will say, half incidentally, as it were, Maitland is here with me, as eager as the warmest of us in the cause. He has been eminently successful in his recruitment, of which he will soon send you details——"

"Ay, but how? That fellow M'Caskey, who has all the papers, did not meet me as I ordered him, and I cannot tell where he is."

"I am to blame for this, Maitland, for I ordered him to come over here, as the most certain of all ways of seeing you."

"And he is here now?"

"Yes. Arrived last night. In the hope of your arrival, I gave him a rendezvous here—any hour from ten to one or two to-night—and we shall soon see him."

"I must confess, I don't care how brief the interview be: the man is not at all to my liking."

"You are not likely to be much bored by him here, at least."

"How do you mean?"

"The police are certain to hear of his arrival, and to give him a friendly hint to arrange his private affairs with all convenient dispatch and move off."

"With what party or section do they connect him?"

"With how many? you might perhaps ask; for I take it he has held office with every shade of opinion, and intrigued for any cause from Henry V. to the reddest republicanism. The authorities, however, always deal with a certain courtesy to a man of this sort. They intimate, simply, We are aware you are here—we know pretty well for what; and so don't push us to any disagreeable measures, but cross over into Belgium or Switzerland. M'Caskey himself told me he was recognized as he drew up at the hotel, and in consequence thinks he shall have to go on in a day or two."

"Is not the fellow's vanity in some measure a reason for this? Does he not rather plume himself on being *l'homme dangereux* to all Europe?"

"In conversation he would certainly give this idea, but not in fact. He is marvellously adroit in all his dealings with the authorities, and in nothing is he more subtle than in the advantage he takes of his own immense conceit. He invariably makes it appear that vanity is his weak point; or, as he phrases it himself, I always show my adversary so much of my hand as will mislead him."

"And is he really as deep as all this would imply?"

"Very deep for an Englishman; fully able to cope with the cunningest of his own people, but a child amongst ours, Maitland."

Maitland laughed scornfully as he said, "For the real work of life all your craft avails little. No man ever cut his way through a wood with a penknife, were it ever so sharp."

"The Count M'Caskey, Eccellenza, desires to know if you receive?" said Caffarelli's servant in a low tone.

"Yes, certainly; but do not admit any one else."

Very significant—but very differently significant—were the looks that passed between Maitland and Caffarelli in the brief interval before M'Caskey entered. At last the door was flung wide, and the distinguished Major appeared in full evening dress, one side of his coat a blaze of stars and crosses, while in front of his cravat he wore the ribbon and collar of some

very showy order. Nothing could be easier than his *entrée*—nothing less embarrassed than his salutation to each in turn, as, throwing his white gloves into his hat, he drew over to the table, and began to search for an unused wine-glass.

"Here is a glass," said Caffarelli. "What will you drink? This is Bordeaux, and this is some sort of Hock; this is Moselle."

"Hand me the sherry; I am chilly. I have been chilly all day, and went out to dine against my will."

"Where did you dine?"

"With Plon-Plon," said he, languidly.

"With the Prince Napoleon?" asked Maitland, incredulously.

"Yes; he insisted on it. I wrote to him to say that La Verrier, the sous-prefect, had invited me to make as short a delay at Paris as was consistent with my perfect convenience—the police euphuism for twenty-four hours; and I said, 'Pray excuse me at dinner, for I shall want to see Caffarelli.' But he wouldn't take any apology, and I went, and we really were very pleasant."

"Who was there?" asked Caffarelli.

"Only seven altogether: Bagration and his pretty niece; an Aldobrandini Countess—bygone, but still handsome; Joseph Poniatowsky; Botrain of *La Patrie;* and your humble servant. Fould, I think, was expected, but did not come. Fearfully hot, this sherry; don't you think so?"

Maitland looked superbly defiant, and turned his head away without ceremony. Caffarelli, however, came quickly to the rescue by pushing over a bottle of Burgundy, and saying, "And it was a pleasant party?"

"Yes, decidedly pleasant," said M'Caskey, with the air of one pronouncing a judicial opinion. "The women were nice, very well dressed—the little Russian especially; and then we talked away as people only do talk in Paris, where there is none of that rotten cant of London, and no subject discussed but the little trivialities of daily life."

Caffarelli's eyes sparkled with mischievous delight as he watched the expansive vanity in M'Caskey's face, and the disgust that darkened in Maitland's. "We had a little of everything," said M'Caskey, with his head thrown back and two fingers of one hand jauntily stuck in his waistcoat pocket. "We had politics—Plon-Plon's own peculiar politics—Europe a democracy, and himself the head of it. We discussed dinners and dinner-givers—a race fast dying out. We talked a little finance, and lastly women."

"Your own theme!" said Caffarelli, with a slight inclination of the head.

"Without vanity I might say it was. Poor old D'Orsay always said, 'Scratch M'Caskey, and I'll back myself for success against any man in Europe.'"

Maitland started as if a viper had bitten him, but by an effort he seemed to restrain himself, and, taking out his cigar-case, began a diligent search for a cigar.

"Ha, cheroots, I see?" cried M'Caskey; "cheroots are a weakness of mine. Pick me out a well-spotted one will you?"

Maitland threw the case as it was across the table to him without a word.

M'Caskey selected some six or eight, and laid them beside him. "You are low, depressed, this evening, Maitland," said he; "what's the matter with you?"

"No, sir, not depressed—disgusted."

"Ah, disgusted!" said M'Caskey, slowly, and his small eyes twinkled like two balls of fire. "Would it be indiscreet to ask the cause?"

"It would be very indiscreet, Count M'Caskey," interposed Caffarelli, "to forget that you are here purely on a grave matter of business—far too grave to be compromised by any forgetfulness on the score of temper."

"Yes, sir," broke in Maitland; "there can always be found a fitting time and place to arrange any small questions outstanding between you and me. We want now to learn something of what you have done in Ireland lately, for the King's service."

M'Caskey drew from his pocket a much-worn pocket-book, crammed to bursting with a variety of loose papers, cards and photographs, which fell about as he opened it. Not heeding the disorder, he sought out a particular page, and read aloud: "Embarked this twenty-second of September at Gravesend, on board the *Ocean Queen*, bound for Messina with machinery, two hundred and eleven labourers—labourers engaged for two years—to work on the state railroads; twenty-eight do. do. on board of the *Star of Swansea*, for Molo de Gaeta with coals—making with three hundred and eighty-two already despatched, within about thirty of the first battalion of the Cacciatori of St. Patrick."

"Well done! bravissimo!" cried Caffarelli, right glad to seize upon the opportunity to restore a pleasanter understanding.

"There's not a man amongst them would not be taken in the

Guards; and they who regard height of stature as the first element of the soldier—amongst whom I am not one—would pronounce them magnificent!"

"And are many more available of the same sort?" asked Caffarelli.

"Ten thousand, sir, if you like to pay for them."

"Do these men understand that they are enlisted as soldiers, not engaged as navvies?" asked Maitland.

"As well as you do. Whatever our friend Caffarelli may think, I can tell him that my countrymen are no more deficient in acuteness than his own. These fellows know the cause just as well as they know the bounty."

"I was not inquiring as to their sympathies," said Maitland, caustically; "I merely wanted to hear how they understood the contract."

"They are hirelings, of course, as I am, and as you are," said M'Caskey.

"By what presumption, sir, do you speak of me?" said Maitland rising, his face dark with passion. "If the accidents of life range us in the same cause, is there any other tie or bond between us?"

"Once more I declare I will have none of this," said Caffarelli, pushing Maitland down into his chair. "Count M'Caskey, the Central Committee have placed you under my orders. These orders are, that you report yourself to General Filangieri at Naples as soon as you can arrive there; that you duly inform the Minister at War of what steps you have already taken in the recruitment, putting yourself at his disposition for further service. Do you want money?" added he in a lower tone, as he drew the Major aside.

"A man always wants money, sir," said M'Caskey, sententiously.

"I am your banker: what shall it be?" said Caffarelli, drawing out his pocket-book.

"For the present," said M'Caskey, carelessly, "a couple of thousand francs will suffice. I have a rather long bill against his Majesty, but it can wait."

He pocketed the notes without deigning to look at them, and then, drawing closer to Caffarelli, said, in a whisper, "You'll have to keep your friend yonder somewhat 'better in hand'—you will, really. If not, I shall have to shoot him."

"The Chevalier Maitland is your superior officer, sir," said Caffarelli, haughtily. "Take care how you speak of him to any one, but more especially to me, who am his friend."

"I am at his 'friend's' orders equally," said the Major: "my case contains two pistols."

Caffarelli turned away with a shrug of the shoulder, and a look that unmistakably bespoke disgust.

"Here goes, then, for the stirrup-cup!" said M'Caskey, filling a large goblet with Burgundy. "To our next meeting, gentlemen," and he bowed as he lifted it to his lips. "Won't you drink to my toast?" said he, stopping.

Caffarelli filled his glass, and touched it to his lips; but Maitland sat with his gaze bent upon the fire, and never looked up.

"Present my homage to the pretty widow when you see her, Maitland, and give her that," and he flung down a photograph on the table. "It's not a good one, but it will serve to remind her of me."

Maitland seized the card and pitched it into the fire, pressing down the embers with his boot.

Caffarelli sprang forward, and laid his hands on M'Caskey's shoulders.

"When and where?" said the Major, calmly.

"Now—here—if you like," said Maitland, as calmly.

"At last," said a deep voice, and a brigadier of the gendarmerie entered, followed by two of his men.

"M. le Comte," said he, addressing the Major, "I have been in search of you since eleven o'clock. There's a special train waiting to convey you to Macon—pray don't lose any more time."

"I shall be at Naples within a fortnight," whispered Maitland.

"All right," replied M'Caskey. "M. le Brigadier, *à vos ordres*. Good bye, Count. By the way, I was forgetting my cheroots, which are really excellent;" and so saying he carefully placed them in his cigar-case; and then, giving his great-coat to one of the gendarmes to assist him while he drew it on, he waved a little familiar adieu with his hand and departed.

"My dear Maitland, how could you so far forget yourself, and with such a man?" said Caffarelli, laying his hands on his shoulder.

"With any *other* man I could *not* have forgotten myself," said he, sternly. "Let us think no more of him."

CHAPTER XXXI.

TWO FRIENDS.

It was like a return to his former self—to his gay happy, careless nature—for Tony Butler to find himself with his friend Skeffy. As painters lay layers of the same colour on, one over the other, to deepen the effect, so does youth double itself by companionship. As for Skeffy, never did a school-boy exult more in a holiday, and, like a school-boy, his spirits boiled over in all manner of small excesses, practical jokes on his fellow-passengers, and all those glorious tomfooleries, to be able to do which, with zest, is worth all the enjoyment that ever cynicism yielded twice told.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come. I didn't see you when the coach drove into the inn yard; and I was so disappointed," said Tony, as he surveyed the mass of luggage which the guard seemed never to finish depositing before his friend.

"Two portmanteaus, sir," said the guard, "three carpet-bags, a dressing-case, a hat-box, a gun-case, bundle of sticks and umbrellas, and I think this parrot and cage are yours."

"A parrot, Skeffy!"

"For Mrs. Maxwell, you dog: she loves parrots, and I gave ten guineas for that beggar, because they assured me he could positively keep up a conversation; and the only thing he *can* say is, 'Don't you wish you may get it?'"

No sooner had the bird heard the words than he screamed them out with a wild and scornful cry that made them sound like a bitter mockery.

"There—that's at *me*," whispered Skeffy—"at *me* and *my* chance of Tilney. I'm half inclined to wring his neck when I hear it."

"Are you looking for any one, Harris?" asked Tony of a servant in livery who had just ridden into the yard.

"Yes, sir; I have a letter from my mistress for a gentleman that was to have come by the mail."

"Here he is," said Tony, as he glanced at the address. "This is Mr. Skeffington Damer."

While Skeffy broke the seal, Tony muttered in his ear, "Mind, old fellow, you are to come to us before you go to Tilney, no matter how pressing she may be."

"Here's a business," said Skeffy; "as well as I can make out her old pothooks, it is that she can't receive me. 'My dear,'—she first wrote 'Nephew,' but it's smudged out—'My dear Cousin Damer, I am much distressed to tell you that you must not come here. It is the scarlatina, which the doctors all think highly infectious, though we burn cinnamon and that other thing through all the rooms. My advice would be to go to Harrogate, or some nice place, to amuse yourself, and I enclose this piece of thin paper.' Where is it, though?" said he, opening the letter and shaking it. "Just think of the old woman forgetting to put up the enclosure!"

"Try the envelope!" cried Tony, eagerly; but no, the envelope was also empty, and it was plain enough she had omitted it.

Skeffy read on—"'I had a very pretty pony for you here, and I remember Lydia Damer told me how nice you looked riding, with the long curls down your back.' Why, that was five-and-twenty years ago!" cried he, with a scream of laughter—"just fancy, Tony!" and he ran his fingers through his hair. "How am I ever to keep up the illusion with this crop! 'But,'"—he went on to read—"'but I suppose I shall not see that now. I shall be eighty-one next November. Mind that you drink my health on the 22nd, if I be alive. I could send you the pony if you thought it would not be too expensive to keep him in London. Tilney is looking beautiful, and the trees are budding as if it were spring. Drop me a line before you leave the neighbourhood; and believe me, your affectionate godmother,

"Dinah Maxwell."

"I think I had better say I'll send an answer," said Skeffy, as he crumpled up the letter; "and as to the enclosure ——"

A wild scream and some unintelligible utterance broke from the parrot at this instant.

"Yes, you beggar, 'you wish I may get it.' By the way, the servant can take that fellow back with him: I am right glad to be rid of him."

"It's the old adage of the ill wind," said Tony, laughing.

"How so? What do you mean?"

"I mean that *your* ill-luck is *our* good fortune; for as you can't go to Tilney, you'll have to stay the longer with us."

Skeffy seized his hand and gave it a cordial shake, and the two young fellows looked fully and frankly at each other, as men do look before the game of life has caught too strong a hold upon their hearts, and taught them over-anxiety to rise winners from it.

"Now then for your chateau," said Skeffy, as he leaped up on the car, already half-hidden beneath his luggage.

"Our chateau is a thatched cabin," said Tony, blushing in spite of all his attempts to seem at ease. "It is only a friend would have heart to face its humble fare."

Not heeding, if he even heard the remark, Skeffy rattled on about everything—past, present, and future; talked of their jolly dinner at Richmond, and of each of their companions on that gay day; asked the names of the various places they passed on the road—what were the usual fortunes of the proprietors, how they spent them, and, seldom waiting for the answer, started some new query, to be forgotten in its turn.

"It is a finer country to ride over," said Tony, anxious to say something favourable for his locality, "than to look at. It is not pretty, perhaps, but there's plenty of grass, and no end of stone walls to jump, and in the season there's some capital trout-fishing too."

"Don't care a copper for either. I'd rather see a new pantomime than the best stag-hunt in Europe. I'd rather see Tom Salter do the double spring backwards than I'd see them take a whale."

"I'm not of your mind, then," said Tony. "I'd rather be out on the hillside of a dull, good-scenting day—well-mounted, of course—and hear the dogs as they rushed yelping through the cover."

"Yoics, yoics, yoics! I saw it all at Astley's, and they took a gate in rare style: but, I say, what is that tower yonder topping the trees?"

"That is Lyle Abbey, Sir Arthur Lyle's place."

"Lyle—Lyle. There was such a picture in the Exhibition last year of two sisters, Maud, or Alice, or Bella Lyle, and another, by Watts. I used to go every morning, before I went down to the office, to have a look at them, and I never was quite certain which I was in love with."

"They are here! they are Sir Arthur's daughters."

"You don't say so! And do you know them, Tony?"

"As well as if they were my sisters."

"Ain't I in luck!" cried Skeffy, in exultation. "I'd have gone to Tarnoff—that's the place Holmes was named consul at,

and wrote back word that it didn't exist, and that the geography fellows were only hoaxing the office! just fancy, hoaxing the office! Hulloa!—what have we here? a four-horse team, by all that's stunning."

"Mrs. Trafford's. Draw up at the side of the road till they pass, Peter," said Tony, hurriedly. The servant on the box of the carriage had, however, apparently announced Tony Butler's presence, for the postilions slackened their pace, and came to a dead halt a few paces in front of the car.

"My mistress, sir, would be glad to speak to you," said the servant, approaching Tony.

"Is she alone, Coles?" asked he, as he descended from the car.

"Yes, sir."

Somewhat reassured by this, but at the same time not a little agitated, Tony drew nigh the carriage. Mrs. Trafford was wrapped up in a large fur mantle—the day was a cold one—and lay back without making any movement to salute, except a slight bend of the head as he approached.

"I have to apologize for stopping you," said she, coldly; "but I had a message to give you from Mr. Maitland, who left this a couple of days ago."

"Is he gone—gone for good?" asked Tony, not really knowing what he said.

"I don't exactly know what 'for good' means," said she, smiling faintly; "but I believe he has not any intention to return here. His message was to say that, being much pressed for time, he had not an opportunity to reply to your note."

"I don't think it required an answer," broke in Tony, sternly.

"Perhaps not as regarded you, but possibly it did as respected himself."

"I don't understand you."

"What I mean is, that, as you had declined his offer, you might possibly, from inadvertence, or any other cause, allude to it; whereas he expressly wished that the subject should never be mentioned."

"You were apparently very much in his confidence?" said Tony, fixing his eyes steadily on her.

"When I learn by what right you ask me that question, I'll answer it," said she, just as defiantly.

Tony's face became crimson, and he could not utter a word. At last he stammered out, "I have a friend here—Mr. Damer: he is just come over to pay a visit at Tilney, and Mrs. Maxwell sends him a note to say that they are all ill there."

"Only Bella, and she is better."

"And was Bella ill?" asked Tony, eagerly.

"Yes, since Tuesday or Wednesday, and even up to Friday, very ill. There was a time this could scarcely have happened without your coming to ask after her."

"Is it my fault, Alice? First of all, I never knew it. You know well I go nowhere. I do not mix with those who frequent grand houses. But tell me of Bella."

"She was never alarmingly ill; but the doctor called it scarlatina, and frightened every one away; and poor Mrs. Maxwell has not yet recovered the shock of seeing her guests depart and her house deserted, for Bella and myself are all that remain."

"May I present my friend to you?—he would take it as such a favour," asked Tony, timidly.

"I think not," said she, with an air of indolence.

"Do let me; he saw your picture—that picture of you and Bella at the Exhibition—and he is wild to see yourself. Don't refuse me, Alice."

"If you think this a favour, I wonder you have courage to ask it. Come, you need not look cross, Master Tony, particularly as all the fault is on your own side. Come over to Tilney the day after to-morrow with your friend."

"But I don't know Mrs. Maxwell."

"That does not signify in the least; do what I bid you. I am as much mistress there as she is while I stay. Come early. I shall be quite alone, for Mark goes to-morrow to town, and Bella will scarcely be well enough to see you."

"And you'll not let me introduce him now?"

"No; I shall look more like my picture in a house dress; and perhaps—though I'll not promise—be in a better temper, too. Good-bye."

"Won't you shake hands with me, Alice?"

"No: it's too cold to take my hand out of my muff. Remember, now, Saturday morning, without fail."

"Alice!" said he, with a look at once devoted and reproachful.

"Tony!" said she, imitating his tone of voice to perfection, "there's your friend getting impatient. Good-bye."

As the spanking team whirled past, Skeffy had but a second or two to catch a glance at the veiled and muffled figure that reclined so voluptuously in the corner of the carriage; but he was ready to declare that she had the most beautiful eyes in the world, and "knew what to do with them besides." "You're in love with her, Tony," cried he, fixing a steadfast stare on the pale and agitated features at his side. "I see it, old fellow! I

know every shade and tint of that blessed thing they miscall the tender passion. Make me no confessions; I don't want them. Your heart is at her feet, and she treats it like a football."

Tony's cheeks grew purple.

"There's no shame in that, my boy. Women do that with better men than either of us; ay, and will continue to do it centuries after you and I shall be canonized as saints. It's that same contempt of us that makes them worth the winning; but, I say, why is the fellow drawing up here?—is he going to bait his beast?"

"No," muttered Tony, with a certain confusion; "but we must get down and walk here. Our road lies by that path yonder: there's no carriage-way up to our 'chateau,'" and he gave a peculiar accent to the last word.

"All right," said Skeffy, gaily. "I'm good for ten miles of a walk."

"I'll not test your powers so far; less than a quarter of an hour will bring us home. Take down the luggage, and I'll send up for it," said he to the driver.

"What honest poor devils you must be down here!" said Skeffy, as he saw the carman deposit the trunks on the road and drive off. "I'd not like to try this experiment in Charing Cross."

"You see there is some good in poverty, after all," said Tony, laughing.

"Egad, I've tried it for some years without discovering it," said Skeffy, gravely. "That," continued he, after a brief pause, "it should make men careless, thoughtless, reckless if you like, I can conceive; but why it should make them honest, is clean beyond me. What an appetite this sharp air is giving me, Master Tony. I'll astonish that sirloin or that saddle of yours, whichever it be."

"More likely neither, Skeffy. You're lucky if it be a rasher and eggs."

"Oh that it may be," cried the other, "and draught beer! Have you got draught beer?"

"I don't think we have any other. There's our crib—that little cabin under the rocks yonder."

"How pretty it is—the snuggest spot I ever saw!"

"You're a good fellow to say so," cried Tony, and his eyes swam in tears as he turned away.

* * * * * *

What a change has come over Tony Butler within the last twenty-four hours! All his fears and terrors as to what Skeffy

would think of their humble cottage and simple mode of life have given way, and there he goes about from place to place, showing to his friend how comfortable everything is, and how snug. "There are grander dining-rooms, no doubt, but did you ever see a warmer or a 'cosier?' And as to the drawing-room—match the view from the window in all Europe: between that great bluff of Fairhead and the huge precipice yonder of the Causeway there is a sweep of coast unrivalled anywhere. Those great rocks are the Skerries; and there, where you see that one stone-pine tree—there, under that cliff, is the cove where I keep my boat; not much of a boat," added he, in a weaker voice, "because I used always to have the cutter—Sir Arthur's yacht. Round that point there is such a spot to bathe in; twenty feet water at the very edge, and a white gravel bottom, without a weed. Passing up that little pathway, you gain the ledge yonder; and there, do you mark the two stones, like gate-piers? there you enter Sir Arthur Lyle's demesne. You can't see the shrubberies, for the ground dips, and the trees will only grow in the valleys here!" And there was a despondent tenderness in the last words that seemed to say, "If it were not for that, this would be paradise!"

Nor was it mere politeness, and the spirit of good breeding, that made Skeffy a genial listener to these praises. What between the sense of a holiday, the delight of what cockneys call an "outing," the fine fresh breezy air of the place, the breadth and space—great elements of expansiveness—Skeffy felt a degree of enjoyment that amounted to ecstasy.

"I don't wonder that you like it all, Tony," said he. "You'll never, in all your wanderings, see anything finer."

"I often say as much to myself," replied Tony. "As I sit here of an evening, with my cigar, I often say, 'Why should I go over the world in search of fortune, when I have all that one wants here—here at my very hand?' Don't you think a fellow might be content with it?"

"Content! I could be as happy as a king here!" and for a moment or two Skeffy really revelled in delighted thoughts of a region where the tinkle of a minister's hand-bell had never been heard; where no "service messengers" ever came; where no dunning tailors invaded; a paradise that knew not the post nor dreamed of the telegraph.

"And as to money," continued Tony, "one does not want to be rich in such a place. I'm as well off here with, we'll say, two hundred a-year—we haven't got so much, but I'll say that—as I should be in London with a thousand."

"Better! decidedly better!" said Skeffy, puffing his cigar, and thinking over that snowstorm of Christmas bills which awaited him on his return.

"If it were not for one thing, Skeffy, I'd never leave it," said he, with a deep sigh, and a look that said as plainly as ever words spoke, "Let me open my heart to you."

"I know it all, old fellow, just as if you had confessed it to me. I know the whole story."

"What do you know, or what do you suspect you know?" said Tony, growing red.

"I say," said Skeffy, with that tone of superiority that he liked to assume,—"I say that I read you like a book."

"Read aloud, then, and I'll say if you're right."

"It's wrong with you here, Butler," said Skeffy, laying his hand on the other's heart; and a deep sigh was all the answer. "Give me another weed," said Skeffy, and for some seconds he employed himself in lighting it. "There's not a man in England," said he, slowly, and with the deliberateness of a judge in giving sentence—"not a man in England knows more of these sort of things than I do. You, I'm certain, take me for a man of pleasure and the world—a gay, butterfly sort of creature, flitting at will from flower to flower; or you believe me—and in that with more reason—a fellow full of ambition, and determined to play a high stake in life; but yet, Tony Butler, within all these there is another nature, like the holy of holies in the sanctuary. Ay, my dear friend, there is the—what the poet calls the 'crimson heart within the rose.' Isn't that it?"

"I don't know," said Tony, bluntly.

And now Skeffy smoked on for some minutes without a word. At length he said, in a solemn tone, "It has not been for nothing, Butler, that I acquired the gift I speak of. If I see into the hearts of men like you, I have paid the price of it."

"I'm not so certain that you can do it," said Tony, half doubting his friend's skill, and half eager to provoke an exercise of it.

"I'll show whether I can or not. Of course, if you like to disclaim or deny——"

"I'll disclaim nothing that I know to be true."

"And I am to speak freely?"

"As freely as you are able."

"Here it is, then, in five words: You are in love, Tony—in love with that beautiful widow."

Tony held his head down between his hands, and was silent.

"You feel that the case is hopeless—that is to say, that you

know, besides being of rank and wealth, she is one to make a great match, and that her family would never consent to hear of your pretensions; and yet all this while you have a sort of lurking suspicion that she cares for you?"

"No, no!" muttered Tony between his hands.

"Well, that she did once, and that not very long ago."

"Not even that," said Tony, drearily.

"I know better—you *do* think so. And I'll tell you more; what makes you so keenly alive to her change—perfidy, you would like to call it—is this, that you have gone through that state of the disease yourself."

"I don't understand you."

"Well you shall. The lovely Alice—isn't that the name?"

Tony nodded.

"The lovely Alice got your own heart only at second hand. You used to be in love with the little girl that was governess at Richmond."

"Not a word of it true—nothing of the kind," broke out Tony fiercely. "Dolly and I were brother and sister—we always said we were."

"What does that signify? I tried the brother-and-sister dodge, and I know what it cost me when she married Maccleston;" and Skeffy here threw his cigar into the sea, as though an emblem of his shipwrecked destiny. "Mind me well, Butler," said he at last; "I did not say that you ever told your heart you loved her; but she knew it, take my word for it. She knew, and in the knowing it was the attraction that drew you on."

"But I was not drawn on."

"Don't tell me, sir. Answer me just this, Did any man ever know the hour, or even the day, that he caught a fever? Could he go back in memory, and say, it was on Tuesday last, at a quarter to three, that my pulse rose, my respiration grew shorter, and my temples began to throb? So it is with love, the most malignant of all fevers. All this time that you and What's-her-name were playing brother and sister so innocently, your hearts were learning to feel in unison—just as two pendulums in the same room acquire the same beat and swing together. You've heard that?"

"I may; but you are all wrong about Dolly."

"What would she say to it?"

"Just what I do."

"Well, we cannot ask her, for she's not here."

"She is here—not two miles from where we are standing; not that it signifies much, for of course neither of us would do *that*."

"Not plump out, certainly, in so many words."

"Not in any way, Skeffy. It is because I look upon Dolly as my own dear sister, I would not suffer a word to be said that could offend her."

"Offend her! oh, dear, how young you are in these things."

"What is it, Jenny?" cried Tony to the servant-girl, who was shouting not very intelligibly, from a little knoll at a distance. "Oh, she's saying that supper is ready, and the kippered salmon getting cold, as if any one cared!"

"Don't they care!" cried Skeffy. "Well, then, they haven't been inhaling this sea-breeze for an hour, as I have. Heaven grant that love has carried off your appetite Tony, for I feel as if I could eat for six."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON THE ROCKS.

It was a rare thing for Tony Butler to lie awake at night, and yet he did so for full an hour or more after that conversation with Skeffy. It was such a strange blunder for one of Skeffy's shrewdness to have made—so inexplicable.

To imagine that he, Tony, had ever been in love with Dolly! Dolly, his playfellow since the time when the "twa had paidled 'i the burn;" Dolly, to whom he went with every little care that crossed him, never shrinking for an instant from those avowals of doubt or difficulty that no one makes to his sweetheart. So, at least, thought Tony. And the same Dolly to whom he had revealed once, in deepest secrecy, that he was in love with Alice! To be sure, it was a boyish confession, made years ago, and since that Alice had grown up to be a woman and was married, so that the story of the love was like a fairy tale.

"In love with Dolly!" muttered he. "If he had but ever seen us together, he would have known that could not be." Poor Tony! he knew of love in its moods of worship and devotion, and in its aspect of a life-giving impulse—a soul-filling, engrossing sentiment—inspiring timidity when near, and the desire for boldness when away. With such alternating influence Dolly had never racked his heart. He sought her with a quiet conscience, untroubled by a fear.

"How could Skeffy make such a mistake! That it is a mistake, who would recognize more quickly than Dolly herself; and with what humorous drollery—a drollery all her own—would she not treat it! A rare punishment for your blunder, Master Skeffy, would it be to tell Dolly of it all in your presence;" and at last, wearied out with thinking, he fell asleep.

The day broke with one of those bright breezy mornings which, though "trying" to the nerves of the weak and delicate, are glorious stimulants to the strong. The sea plashed merrily over the rocks, and the white streaky clouds flew over the land with a speed that said it blew hard at sea. "Glorious day for

a sail, Skeffy; we can beat out, and come back with a stern-wind whenever we like."

"I'll anticipate the wish by staying on shore, Tony."

"I can't offer you a mount, Skeffy, for I am not the owner of even a donkey."

"Who wants one? Who wants anything better than to go down where we were yesterday evening, under that big black rock, with the sea before us, and the whole wide world behind us, and talk? When a fellow lives as I do, cooped up within four walls, the range of his view some tiers of pigeon-holes, mere freedom and a sea-breeze are the grandest luxuries in creation;" and off they set, armed with an ample supply of tobacco, the life-buoy of those strugglers in the sea of thought who only ask to float, but not to reach the shore.

How delightfully did the hours pass over! At least so Tony felt, for what a wonderful fellow was Skeffy! What had he not seen, or heard, or read? What theme was new, what subject unknown to him? But, above all, what a marvellous insight had he into the world—the actual world of men and women! Great people were not to *his* eyes mighty gods and goddesses, seated loftily on a West-End Olympus, but fallible mortals, with chagrins about the court, and grievances about invitations to Windsor. Ministers too, whose nods shook empires, were humanities, very irritable under the gout, and much given to colchicum. Skeffy "knew the whole thing"—*he* was not one of the mere audience. He lived in the green-room or in the "flats." He knew all the secrets of state, from the splendid arnaments that existed on paper, to the mock thunders that were manufactured and patented by F. O.

These things Skeffy told like confidences—secrets he would not have breathed to any one he held less near his heart than Tony. But somehow commonplaces told by the lips of authority will assume an immense authority, and carry with them a stupendous weight; and Tony listened to the precious words of wisdom as he might have listened to the voice of Solomon.

But even more interesting still did he become as he sketched forth, very vaguely, indeed—a sort of Turner in his later style of cloud and vapour—his own great future. Not very clear and distinct the steps by which he was fated to rise, but palpable enough the great elevation he was ultimately to occupy.

"Don't imagine, old fellow," said he, laying his hand on Tony's shoulders, "that I am going to forget you when that time comes. I'm not going to leave you a Queen's messenger."

"What could you make of me?" said Tony, despondently.

"Fifty things," said the other, with a confidence that seemed to say, I, Skeffy, am equal to more than this; "fifty things. You, of course, cannot be expected to know it, but I can tell you, it's far harder to get a small place than a big one —harder to be a corporal than a lieutenant-general."

"How do you explain that?" asked Tony, with an eager curiosity.

"You can't understand it without knowing life. I cannot convey to you how to win a trick where you don't know the game." And Skeffy showed, by the impatient way he tried to light a fresh cigar, that he was not fully satisfied with the force or clearness of his own explanation; and he went on: "You see, old fellow, when you have climbed up some rungs of the ladder with a certain amount of assurance, many will think you are determined to get to the top."

"Well, but if a man's ladder has only one rung, as I imagine is the case with mine!" broke in Tony.

Skeffy looked at his companion for a moment, half surprised that he should have carried out the figure, and then laughed heartily, as he said, 'Splice it to mine, my boy; it will bear us both."

It was no use that Tony shook his head and looked despondingly; there was a hopeful warmth about Skeffy not to be extinguished by any discouragement. In fact, if a shade of dissatisfaction seemed ever to cloud the brightness of his visions, it was the fear lest, even in his success, some other career might be neglected wherein the rewards were greater and the prizes more splendid. He knew, and he did not scruple to declare that he knew, if he had been a soldier, he'd have risen to the highest command. If he'd have gone to the bar, he'd have ended on the woolsack. Had he "taken that Indian appointment," he'd have been high up by this time on the Council, with his eye on Government House for a finish. "That's what depresses me about diplomacy, Tony. The higher you go, the less sure you are. They—I mean your own party —give you Paris or St. Petersburg, we'll say; and if they go out, so must you."

"Why must you?" asked Tony.

"For the reason that the well-bred dog went down-stairs when he saw certain preparations that betokened kicking him down.

"After all, I think a new colony and the goldfields the real thing—the glorious independence of it; you live how you like, and with whom you like. No Mrs. Grundy to say, 'Do you

know who dined with Skeffington Damer yesterday?' 'Did you remark the young woman who sat beside him in his carriage?' and suchlike."

"But you cannot be always sure of your nuggets," muttered Tony. "I've seen fellows come back poorer than they went."

"Of course you have; it's not every horse wins the Derby, old boy. And I'll tell you another thing, too; the feeling, the instinct, the inner consciousness that you carry success in your nature, is a rarer and a higher gift than the very power to succeed. You meet with clever fellows every day in the week who have no gauge of their own cleverness. To give an illustration; you write a book, we'll say."

"No, I don't," blurted out Tony.

"Well, but you might; it is at least possible."

"It is not."

"Well, let us take something else. You are about to try something that has a great reward attached to it, if successful; you want, we'll suppose, to marry a woman of high rank and large fortune, very beautiful—in fact, one to whom, according to every day notions, you have not the slightest pretensions. Isn't that a strong case, eh?"

"Worse than the book. Perhaps I'd better try authorship," said Tony, growing very red; "but make the case your own, and I'll listen just as attentively."

"Well, here goes; I have only to draw on memory," said he, with a sigh; "I suppose you don't remember seeing in the papers, about a year and a half ago, that the Prince of Cobourg Cohari —not one of our Cobourgs, but an Austrian branch—came over to visit the Queen. He brought his daughter Olga with him; she was called Olga after the Empress of Russia's sister. And such a girl! She was nearly as tall as you, Tony—I'll swear she was—with enormous blue eyes, and masses of fair hair that she wore in some Russian fashion that seemed as if it had fallen loose over her neck and shoulders. And weren't they shoulders! I do like a large woman! a regular Cleopatra—indolent, voluptuous, dreamy. I like the majestic languor of their walk; and there is a massive grandeur in their slightest gesture that is very imposing."

"Go on," muttered Tony, as the other seemed to pause for a sentiment of concurrence.

"I was in the Household in those days, and I was sent down with old Dollington to Dover to meet them; but somehow they arrived before we got down, and were comfortably installed at the 'Lord Warden' when we arrived. It did not matter much;

for old Cohari was seized with an attack of gout, and could not stir; and there I was, running back and forward to the telegraph office all day, reporting how he was, and whether he would or would not have Sir James This or Sir John That down to see him! Dollington and he were old friends fortunately, and had a deal to say to each other, so that I was constantly with Olga. At first she was supremely haughty and distant, as you may imagine; a regular Austrian Serene Highness grafted on a beauty —fancy that! but it never deterred *me;* and I contrived that she should see mine was the homage of a heart she had captivated, not of a courtier that was bound to obey her. She saw it, sir—saw it at once; saw it with that instinct that whispers to the female heart, 'He loves me,' ere the man has ever said it to himself. She not only saw, but she did not discourage, my passion. Twenty little incidents of our daily life showed this, as we rambled across the downs together, or strolled along the shore to watch the setting sun and the arrival of the mail-boat from Calais.

"At last the Prince recovered sufficiently to continue his journey, and I went down to order a special train to take us up to town the following morning. By some stupid arrangement, however, of the directors, an earlier announcement should have been given, and all they could do was to let us have one of the royal carriages attached to the express. I was vexed at this, and so was Dollington, but the Prince did not care in the least; and when I went to speak of it to Olga, she hung down her head for an instant, and then, in a voice and with an accent I shall never forget, she said, 'Ah, Monsieur Damer, it would appear to be your destiny to be always too late!' She left me as she spoke, and we never met after; for on that same evening I learned from Dollington she was betrothed to the Duke Max of Hohenhammelsbraten, and to be married in a month. That was the meaning of her emotion—that was the source of a sorrow that all but overcame her; for she loved me, Tony—she loved me! not with that headlong devotion that belongs to the warmer races, but with a Teutonic love; and when she said, 'I was too late,' it was the declaration of a heart whose valves worked under a moderate pressure, and never risked an explosion."

"But how do you know that she was not alluding to the train, and to your being late to receive them on the landing?" asked Tony.

"Ain't you prosaic, Tony—ain't you six-and-eightpence! with your dull and commonplace interpretation! I tell you,

sir, that she meant, 'I love you, but it is in vain—I love you, but another is before you—I love you, but you come too late!'"

"And what did you do?" asked Tony, anxious to relieve himself from a position of some awkwardness.

"I acted with dignity, sir. I resigned in the Household, and got appointed to the Colonial."

"And what does it all prove, except it be something against your own theory, that a man should think there is nothing too high for his reach?"

"Verily, Tony, I have much to teach you," said Skeffy, gravely, but good-naturedly. "This little incident shows by what slight casualties our fortunes are swayed: had it not been for Max of Hammelsbraten, where might not I have been to-day? It is by the flaw in the metal the strength of the gun is measured—so it is by a man's failures in life you can estimate his value. Another would not have dared to raise his eyes so high!"

"That I can well believe," said Tony, dryly.

"You, for instance, would no more have permitted yourself to fall in love with her, than you'd have thought of tossing for half-crowns with the Prince her father."

"Pretty much the same," muttered Tony.

"That's it—that is exactly what establishes the difference between men in life. It is by the elevation given to the cannon that the ball is thrown so far. It is by the high purpose of a man that you measure his genius."

"All the genius in the world won't make you able to take a horse over seven feet of a stone wall," said Tony; "and whatever is impossible has no interest for me."

"You never can say what is impossible," broke in Skeffy. "I'll tell you experiences of mine, and you'll exclaim at every step, 'How could that be?'" Skeffy had now thoroughly warmed to his theme—the theme he loved best in the world—himself; for he was one of those who "take out" all their egotism in talk. Let him only speak of himself, and he was ready to act heartily and energetically in the cause of his friends. All that he possessed was at their service—his time, his talents, his ingenuity, his influence, and his purse. He could give them everything but one; he could not make them heroes in his stories. No, his romance was his own realm, and he could share it with none.

Listen to him, and there never was a man so traded on—so robbed and pilfered from. A Chancellor of the Exchequer had

caught up that notion of his about the tax on domestic cats. It was on the railroad he had dropped that hint about a supply of cordials in all fire-escapes. That clever suggestion of a web livery that would fit footmen of all sizes was his—he remembered the day he made it, and the fellow that stole it, too, on the chain-pier at Brighton. What leaders in the *Times*—what smart things in the *Saturday*—what sketches in *Punch*, were constructed out of his dinner-talk!

Poor Tony listened to all these with astonishment, and even confusion, for one-half, at least, of the topics were totally strange and new to him. "Tell me," said he at last, with a bold effort to come back to a land of solid reality, "what of that poor fellow whose bundle I carried away with me? Your letter said something mysterious about him, which I could make nothing of."

"Ah, yes—a dangerous dog—a friend of Mazzini's, and a member of I can't say how many secret societies. The Inspector, hearing that I had asked after him at the hotel, came up to F. O. t'other morning to learn what I knew of him, and each of us tried for full half an hour to pump the other."

"I'll not believe one word against him," said Tony, sturdily; "an honester, franker face I never looked at."

"No doubt! Who would wish to see a better-looking fellow than Orsini?"

"And what has become of him—of Quin, I mean?"

"Got away, clean away, and no one knows how or where. I'll tell *you*, Tony," said he, "what I would not tell another—that they stole that idea of the explosive bombs from *me*."

"You don't mean to say——"

"Of course not, old fellow. I'm not a man to counsel assassination; but in the loose way I talk, throwing out notions for this and hints for that, they caught up this idea just as Blakeney did that plan of mine for rifling large guns."

Tony fixed his eyes on him for a moment or two in silence, and then said gravely, "I think it must be near dinner-time; let us saunter towards home."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A MORNING CALL AT TILNEY.

On the morning after this conversation, the two friends set out for Tilney—Skeffy, as usual, full of himself, and consequently in high spirits—happy in the present, and confident for the future. Tony, indeed, was delighted with his companion, and thoroughly enjoyed the volatile gaiety of one who seemed to derive pleasure from everything. With all a school-boy's zest for a holiday, Skeffy would be for ever at something. Now he would take the driver's seat on the car and play coachman till, with one wheel in the ditch and the conveyance nearly over, he was summarily deposed by Tony, and stoutly rated for his awkwardness.

Then it was his pleasure to "chaff" the people on the road—a population the least susceptible of drollery in all Europe!—a grave, saturnine race, who, but for Tony's intervention, would have more than once resented such liberties very practically. As they saw the smoke from the chimney of a little cottage under the hill, and heard it was there Dolly Stewart lived, it was all Tony could do to prevent Skeffy running down to "have a look at her," just as it required actual force to keep him from jumping off as they passed a village school, where Skeffy wanted to examine a class in the Catechism. Then he would eat and drink everywhere, and, with a mock desire for information, ask the name of every place they passed, and as invariably miscall them, to the no small amusement of the carman, this being about the limit of his appreciation of fun.

"What a fidgety beggar you are;" said Tony, half angry and half laughing at the incessant caprices of his vivacious companion. "Do you know it's now going on to eleven o'clock, and we have fourteen miles yet before us?"

"One must eat occasionally, my dear friend. Even in the 'Arabian Nights' the heroine takes a slight refection of dates now and then."

"But this is our third 'slight refection' this morning, and we shall probably arrive at Tilney for luncheon."

"*You* can bear long fasts, I know. I have often heard of the 'starving Irish;' but the Anglo-Saxon stomach requires a 'retainer,' to remind it of the great cause to be tried at dinner-time. A mere bite of bread and cheese, and I'm with you."

At last the deep woods of Tilney came in sight; and evidence of a well cared-for estate—trim cottages on the roadside, and tasteful little gardens—showed that they were approaching the residence of one who was proud of her tenantry.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Tony, struck by a momentary silence on his companion's part.

"I was thinking, Tony," said he, gravely—"I was just thinking whether I could not summon up a sort of emotion at seeing the woods under whose shade my ancestors must have walked for heaven knows what centuries."

"Your ancestors! Why, they never lived here."

"Well, if they didn't they ought. It seems a grand old place, and I already feel my heart warming to it. By the way, where's Maitland?"

"Gone; I told you he was off to the Continent. What do you know about this man—anything?"

"Not much. When I was at school, Tony, whenever in our New Testament examination they ask me who it was did this or said that, I always answered John the Baptist, and in eight times out of ten it was a hit; and so in secular matters, whenever I was puzzled about a fellow's parentage, I invariably said—and you'll find as a rule it is invaluable—he's a son of George IV., or his father was. It accounts for everything—good looks, plenty of cash, air, swagger, mystery. It explains how a fellow knows every one, and is claimed by none."

"And is this Maitland's origin?"

"I can't tell; perhaps it is. Find me a better, or, as the poet says, 'has accipe mecum.' I say, is that the gate-lodge? Tony, old fellow, I hope I'll have you spending your Christmas here one of these days, with Skeff Damer your host!"

"More unlikely things have happened!" said Tony, quietly.

"What a cold northernism is that! Why, man, what so likely—what so highly probable—what, were I a sanguine fellow, would I say so nearly certain? It was through a branch of the Damers—no, of the Nevils, I mean—who intermarried with us, that the Maxwells got the estate. Paul Nevil was Morton Maxwell's mother—aunt, I should say——"

"Or uncle, perhaps," gravely interposed Tony.

"Yes, uncle—you're right! but you've muddled my genealogy for all that! Let us see. Who was Noel Skeffington? Noel

was a sort of pivot in our family-engine, and everything seemed to depend on him; and such a respect had we for his intentions, that we went on contesting the meaning of his last will till we found out there was nothing more left to fight for. This Noel was the man that caught King George's horse when he was run away with at the battle of Dettingen; and the King wanted to make him a baronet, but, with tears in his eyes, he asked how he had ever incurred the royal displeasure to be visited with such a mark of disgrace? 'At all events,' said he, 'my innocent child, who is four years old, could never have offended your majesty. Do not, therefore, involve him in my shame. Commute the sentence to knighthood, and my dishonour will die with me.'"

"I never heard of greater insolence," said Tony.

"It saved us though; but for this, I should have been Sir Skeffington to-day. Is that the house I see yonder?"

"That's a wing of it."

"'Home of my fathers, how my bosom throbs!' What's the next line? 'Home of my fathers, through my heart there runs!' That's it—'there runs'—runs. I forget how it goes, but I suppose it must rhyme to 'duns.'"

"Now, try and be reasonable for a couple of minutes," said Tony. "I scarcely am known to Mrs. Maxwell at all. I don't mean to stop here; I intend to go back to-night. What are your movements?"

"Let the Fates decide; that is to say, I'll toss up—heads, and I am to have the estate, and therefore remain; tails—I'm disinherited, and go back with you."

"I want you to be serious, Skeffy."

"Very kind of you, when I've only got fourteen days' leave, and three of them gone already."

"I'd rather you'd return with me; but I'd not like you to risk your future to please me."

"Has jealousy no share in this? Be frank and open; 'Crede Damer' is our proud motto; and by Jove, if certain tailors and bootmakers did not accept it, it would be an evil day for your humble servant!"

"I don't understand you," said Tony, gravely.

"You fear I'll make love to 'your widow,' Tony. Don't get so red, old fellow, nor look as if you wanted to throw me into the fish-pond."

"I had half a mind to do it," muttered Tony, in something between jest and earnest.

"I knew it—I saw it. You looked what the Yankees

call mean-ugly; and positively I was afraid of you. But just reflect on the indelible disgrace it would be to you if I was drowned."

"You can swim, I suppose?"

"Not a stroke; it's about the only thing I cannot do."

"Why, you told me yesterday that you never shoot, you couldn't ride, never handled a fishing-rod."

"Nor hemmed a pocket-handkerchief," broke in Skeffy. "I own not to have any small accomplishments. What a noble building! I declare I am attached to it already. No, Tony; I pledge you my word of honour, no matter how pressed I may be, I'll not cut down a tree here."

"You may go round to the stable-yard," said Tony to the driver—"they'll feed you and your horse here."

"Of course they will," cried Skeffy; and then, grasping Tony's two hands he said, "You are welcome to Tilney, my dear boy; I am heartily glad to see you here."

Tony turned and pulled the bell; the deep summons echoed loudly, and a number of small dogs joined in the uproar at the same time.

"There's 'the deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home,'" said Skeffy, while he threw the end of his cigar away.

A servant soon appeared and ushered them into a large low-ceilinged room, with fireplaces of antique fashion, the chimney-pieces of dark oak, surmounted by massive coats of arms glowing in all the colours of heraldry. It was eminently comfortable in all its details of fat low ottomans, deep easy-chairs, and squat cushions; and although the three windows which lighted it looked out upon a lawn, the view was bounded by a belt of trees, as though to convey that it was a room in which snugness was to be typified, to the exclusion of all that pretended to elegance. A massive and splendidly-bound Bible, showing little signs of use, lay on a centre table; a very well-thumbed "Peerage" was beside it.

"I say, Tony, this is evidently aunt Maxwell's own drawing-room. It has all the peculiar grimness of an old lady's sanctum; and I declare that fat old dog, snoring away on the rug, looks like a relation." While he stooped down to examine the creature more closely, the door opened, and Mrs. Maxwell, dressed in bonnet and shawl, and with a small garden watering-pot in her hand, entered. She only saw Tony; and, running towards him with her open hand, said, "You naughty boy, didn't I tell you not to come here?"

Tony blushed deeply, and blurted something about being told or ordered to come by Mrs. Trafford.

"Well, well; it doesn't matter now; there's no danger. It's not 'catching,' the doctor says, and she'll be up to-morrow. Dear me! and who is this?" The latter question was addressed to Skeffy, who had just risen from his knees.

"Mr. Skeffington Damer, ma'am," said Tony.

"And who are you, then?"

"Tony Butler: I thought you knew me."

"To be sure I do, and delighted to see you too. And this Pickle is Skeff, is he?"

"Dear aunt, let me embrace you," cried Skeffy, rushing rapturously into her arms.

"Well, I declare!" said the old lady, looking from one to the other; "I thought, if it was you, Skeff, what a great fine tall man you had grown; and there you are, the same little creature I saw you last."

"Little, aunt! what do you mean by little? Standard of the Line! In France I should be a Grenadier!"

The old lady laughed heartily at the haughty air with which he drew himself up and threw forward his chest as he spoke.

"What a nice parrot you have sent me! but I can't make out what it is he says."

He says, 'Don't you wish you may get it?' aunt."

"Ah! so it is; and he means luncheon, I'm sure, which is just coming on the table. I hope you are both very hungry?"

"I ought to be, aunt. It's a long drive from the Causeway here.—Hold your tongue, you dog," whispered he to Tony; "say nothing about the three breakfasts on the road, or I shall be disgraced."

"And how is your mother, Mr. Tony? I hope she has good health. Give me your arm to the dining-room; Pickle will take care of himself. This is a sickly season. The poor dear Commodore fell ill! and though the weather is so severe, woodcocks very scarce—there's a step here—and all so frightened for fear of the scarlatina that they run away; and I really wanted you here, to introduce you to—who was it?—not Mrs. Craycroft, was it? Tell Mrs. Trafford luncheon is ready, Groves, and say Mr. Butler is here. She doesn't know you, Pickle. Maybe you don't like to be called Pickle now?"

"Of course I do, aunt; it reminds me of long ago," said he with an air of emotion.

"By the way, it was George, and not you, I used to call Pickle—poor George, that went to Bombay."

"Ah, yes; he was India Pickle, aunt, and you used to call me Piccallili!"

"Perhaps I did, but I forget. Here, take the head of the table; Mr. Tony, sit by me. Oh, dear! what a small party! This day last week we were twenty-seven! Oh, he'll not find Alice, for I left her in my flower-garden; I'll go for her myself."

"Make yourself at home, Tony," said Skeffy, as soon as the old lady left the room. "Believe me, it is with no common pleasure that I see you under my roof."

"I was going to play parrot, and say, 'Don't you wish you may?'" muttered Tony, dryly.

"Unbeliever, that will not credit the mutton on his plate, nor the sherry in his glass! Hush! here they are."

Alice sailed proudly into the room, gave her hand to Tony with a pretended air of condescension, but a real cordiality, and said—"You're a good boy, after all; and Bella sends you all manner of kind forgivenesses."

"My nephew Damer, Alice," said Mrs. Maxwell, never very formal in her presentations of those she regarded as little more than children. "I suppose he'll not mind being called Pickle before you?"

Even Tony—not the shrewdest, certainly, of observers—was struck by the well-bred ease with which his friend conducted himself in a situation of some difficulty, managing, at the same time, neither to offend the old lady's susceptibilities, nor sacrifice the respect he owed himself. In fact, the presence of Alice recalled Skeffy, as if by magic, to every observance of his daily life. She belonged to the world he knew best—perhaps the only one he knew at all; and his conversation at once became as easy and as natural as though he were once more back in the society of the great city.

Mrs. Maxwell, however, would not part with him so easily, and proceeded to put him through a catechism of all their connections—Skeffingtons, Damers, Maxwells, and Nevils—in every variety of combination. As Skeffy avowed afterwards, "The 'Little Go' was nothing to it." With the intention of shocking the old lady, and what he called "shunting her" off all her inquiries, he reported nothing of the family but disasters and disgraces. The men and women of the house inherited, according to him, little of the proud boast of the Bayards; no one ever before heard such a catalogue of rogues, swindlers, defaulters, nor so many narratives of separations and divorces. What he meant for a shock turned out a seduction; and she

grew madly eager to hear more—more even than he was prepared to invent.

"Ugh!" said he at last to himself, as he tossed off a glass of sherry, "I'm coming fast to capital offences, and if she presses me more I'll give her a murder."

These family histories, apparently so confidentially imparted, gave Alice a pretext to take Tony off with her, and show him the gardens. Poor Tony, too, was eager to have an opportunity to speak of his friend to Alice. "Skeffy was such a good fellow; so hearty—so generous—so ready to do a kind thing; and then, such a thorough gentleman! If you had but seen him, Alice, in our little cabin, so very different in every way from all he is accustomed to, and saw how delighted he was with everything; how pleasantly he fell into all our habits, and how nice his manner to my mother. She reads people pretty quickly; and I'll tell you what she said—'He has a brave big heart under all his motley.'"

"I rather like him already," said Alice, with a faint smile at Tony's eagerness; "he is going to stop here, is he not?"

"I cannot tell. I only know that Mrs. Maxwell wrote to put him off."

"Yes, that she did a couple of days ago; but now that Bella is so much better—so nearly well, I may say—I think she means to keep him, and you too, Tony, if you will so far favour us."

"I cannot—it is impossible."

"I had hoped, Tony," said she, with a malicious sparkle in her eyes, "that it was only against Lyle Abbey you bore a grudge, and not against every house where I should happen to be a visitor."

"Alice, Alice!" said he, with trembling lips, "surely this is not fair."

"If it be true, is the question; and until you have told me why you ceased to come to us—why you gave up those who always liked you—I must, I cannot help believing it to be true."

Tony was silent: his heart swelled up as if it would burst his chest; but he struggled manfully, and hid his emotion.

"I conclude," said she, sharply, "it was not a mere caprice which made you throw us off. You had a reason, or something that you fancied was a reason."

"It is only fair to suppose so," said he, gravely.

"Well, I'll give you the benefit of that supposition; and I ask you, as a matter of right, to give me your reason."

"I cannot, Alice—I cannot," stammered he out, while a deadly paleness spread over his face.

"Tony," said she, gravely, "if you were a man of the world like your friend Mr. Damer, for instance, I would probably say say that in a matter of this kind you ought to be left to your own judgment; but you are not. You are a kind-hearted simple-minded boy. Nay, don't blush and look offended; I never meant to offend you. Don't you know that?" and she held out to him her fair white hand, the taper fingers trembling with a slight emotion. Tony stooped and kissed it with a rapturous devotion. "There, I did not mean that, Master Tony," said she, blushing; "I never intended your offence was to be condoned; I only thought of a free pardon."

"Then give it to me, Alice," said he, gulping down his emotion; "for I am going away, and who knows when I shall see you again?"

"Indeed," said she, with a look of agitation; "have you reconsidered it, then? have you resolved to join Maitland?"

"And were you told of this, Alice?"

"Yes, Tony: as one who feels a very deep interest in you, I came to hear it; but, indeed, partly by an accident."

"Will you tell me what it was you heard?" said he, gravely; "for I am curious to hear whether you know more than myself."

"You were to go abroad with Maitland—you were to travel on the Continent together."

"And I was to be his secretary, eh?" broke in Tony, with a bitter laugh; "wasn't that the notable project?"

"You know well, Tony, it was to be only in name."

"Of course I do; my incapacity would insure that much."

"I must say, Tony," said she, reproachfully, "that so far as I know of Mr. Maitland's intentions towards you, they were both kind and generous. In all that he said to me, there was the delicacy of a gentleman towards a gentleman."

"He told you, however, that I had refused his offer?"

"Yes; he said it with much regret, and I asked his leave to employ any influence I might possess over you to make you retract the refusal—at least to think again over his offer."

"And of course he refused you nothing?" said Tony, with a sneering smile.

"Pardon me—he did not grant my request."

"Then I think better of him than I did before."

"I suspect, Tony, that, once you understood each other, you are men to be friends."

"You mean by that to flatter me, Alice—and of course it is great flattery; but whether it is that I am too conscious of my own inferiority, or that I have, as I feel I have, such a hearty hatred of your accomplished friend, I would detest the tie that should bind me to him. Is he coming back here?"

"I do not know."

"You do not know!" said he, slowly, as he fixed his eyes on her.

"Take care, sir, take care; you never trod on more dangerous ground than when you forgot what was due to *me*. I told you I did not know; it was not necessary I should repeat it."

"There was a time when you rebuked my bad breeding less painfully, Alice," said he, in deep sorrow; "but these are days not to come back again. I do not know if it is not misery to remember them."

"John Anthony Butler, Esq.," cried a loud voice, and Skeffy sprang over a box-hedge almost as tall as himself, flourishing a great sealed packet in his hand. "A despatch on Her Majesty's service just sent on here!" cried he; "and now remember, Tony, if it's Viceroy you're named, I insist on being Chief Sec.; if you go to India as Governor-General, I claim Bombay or Madras. What stuff is the fellow made of? Did you ever see such a stolid indifference? He doesn't want to know what the Fates have decreed him."

"I don't care one farthing," said Tony, doggedly.

"Here goes, then, to see," cried Skeffy, tearing open the packet and reading: "'Downing Street, Friday, 5th.—Mr. Butler will report himself for service as F. O. Messenger on Tuesday morning, 9th. By order of the Under-Secretary of State.'"

"There's a way to issue a service summons. It was Graves wrote that, I'd swear. All he ought to have said was, 'Butler for service, F. O., to report immediately.'"

"I suppose the form is no great matter," said Mrs. Trafford, whose eyes now turned with an anxious interest towards Tony.

"The form is everything, I assure you. The Chief Secretary is a regular Tartar about style. One of our fellows, who has an impediment in his speech, once wrote, 'I had had,' in a despatch, and my Lord noted it with, 'It is inexcusable that he should stutter in writing.'"

"I must be there on Wednesday, is it?" asked Tony.

"Tuesday—Tuesday, and in good time, too. But ain't you lucky, you dog! They're so hard pressed for messengers,

they've got no time to examine you. You are to enter official life *par la petite porte*, but you get in without knocking."

"I cannot imagine that the examination would be much of a difficulty," said Mrs. Trafford.

Tony shook his head in dissent, and gave a sad faint sigh.

"I'd engage to coach him in a week," broke in Skeffy. "It was I ground Vyse in Chinese, and taught him that glorious drinking song, 'Tehin Tehan Ili-Ta!' that he offered to sing before the Commissioners if they could play the accompaniment."

Leaving Skeffy to revel in his gratifying memories of such literary successes, Alice turned away a few steps with Tony.

"Let us part good friends, Tony," said she, in a low tone. "You'll go up to the Abbey, I hope, and wish them a good-bye, won't you?"

"I am half ashamed to go now," muttered he.

"No, no, Tony; don't fancy that there is any breach in our friendship; and tell me another thing: would you like me to write to you? I know you're not very fond of writing yourself, but I'll not be exacting. You shall have two for one—three, if you deserve it."

He could not utter a word; his heart felt as if it would burst through his side, and a sense of suffocation almost choked him. He knew, if he tried to speak, that his emotion would break out, and in his pride he would have suffered torture rather than shed a tear.

With a woman's nice tact she saw his confusion, and hastened to relieve it. "The first letter must, however, be from you, Tony. It need be only half a dozen lines, to say if you have passed your examination, what you think of your new career, and where you are going."

"I couldn't write!" stammered out Tony; "I could not!"

"Well, I will," said she, with a tone of kind feeling. "Your mother shall tell me where to address you."

"You will see mother, then?" asked he, eagerly.

"Of course, Tony. If Mrs. Butler will permit me, I will be a frequent visitor."

"Oh, if I thought so!"

"Do think so—be assured of it; and remember, Tony, whenever you have courage to think of me as your own old friend of long ago, write and tell me so." These words were not said

without a certain difficulty. "There, don't let us appear foolish to your smart friend, yonder. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Alice," said he, and now the tears rushed fast, and rolled down his cheeks; but he drew his hand roughly across his face, and, springing upon the car, said, "Drive on, and as hard as you can; I am too late here."

Skeffy shouted his adieux, and waved a most picturesque farewell; but Tony neither heard nor saw either. Both hands were pressed on his face, and he sobbed as if his very heart was breaking.

"Well, if that's not a melodramatic exit, I'm a Dutchman," exclaimed Skeffy, turning to address Alice; but she too was gone, and he was left standing there alone.

"Don't be angry with me, Bella! don't scold, and I'll tell you of an indiscretion I have just committed," said Alice, as she sat on her sister's bed.

"I think I can guess it," said Bella, looking up in her face.

"No, you cannot—you are not within a thousand miles of it. I know perfectly what you mean, Bella; you suspect that I have opened a flirtation with the distinguished Londoner, the wonderful Skeffington Damer."

Bella shook her head dissentingly.

"Not but one might," continued Alice, laughing, "in a dull season, with an empty house and nothing to do; just as I've seen you trying to play that twankling old harpsichord in the Flemish drawing-room, for want of better; but you are wrong, for all that."

"It was not of him I was thinking, Alice—on my word, it was not. I had another, and, I suppose, a very different person, in my head."

"Tony!"

"Just so."

"Well, what of him; and what the indiscretion with which you would charge me?"

"With which you charge yourself, Alice, dearest! I see it all in that pink spot on your cheek, in that trembling of your lips, and in that quick impatience of your manner."

"Dear me! what can it be which has occasioned such agitation, and called up such terrible witnesses against me?"

"I'll tell you, Alice. You have sent away that poor boy more in love than ever. You have let him carry away a hope which you well know is only a delusion."

"I protest this is too bad. I never dreamed of such a lecture, and I'll just go downstairs and make a victim of Mr. Damer."

Alice arose and dashed out of the room; not, however, to do as she said, but to hurry to her own room, and lock the door after her as she entered it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TONY ASKS COUNSEL.

It was just as Bella said; Alice had sent off that poor boy "twice as much in love as ever." Poor fellow! what a strange conflict was that that raged within him!—all that can make life glorious, give ecstasy to the present and hope to the future, mingled with everything that can throw a gloom over existence, and make it a burden and a task. Must it be ever thus?—must the most exquisite moments of our life, when we have youth and hope and health and energy, be dashed with fears that make us forget all the blessings of our lot, and deem ourselves the most wretched of created beings?

In this feverish alternation he travelled along homeward—now thinking of the great things he could do and dare to win her love, now foreshadowing the time when all hopes should be extinguished, and he should walk the world alone and forsaken. He went over in memory—who has not done so at one time or other?—all she had said to him at their last meeting, asking what ground there might be for hope in this, what reason for belief in that. With what intense avidity do we seek for the sands of gold in this crushed and crumbled rock! how eagerly do we peer to catch one glittering grain that shall whisper to us of wealth hereafter!

Surely, thought he, Alice is too good and too true-hearted to give me even this much of hope if she meant me to despair. Why should she offer to write to me if she intended that I was to forget her? "I wonder," muttered he, in his dark spirit of doubt—"I wonder if this be simply the woman's way of treating a love she deems beneath her?" He had read in some book or other that it is no uncommon thing for those women whose grace and beauty win homage and devotion thus to sport with the affections of their worshippers, and that in this exercise of a cruel power they find an exquisite delight. But Alice was too proud and too high-hearted for such an ignoble pastime. But then he had read too that women sometimes

fancy that, by encouraging a devotion they never mean to reward, they tend to elevate men's thoughts, ennobling their ambitions, and inspiring them with purer, holier hopes. What if she should mean this, and no more than this? Would not her very hatred be more bearable than such pity? For a while this cruel thought unmanned him, and he sat there like one stunned and powerless.

For some time the road had led between the low furze-clad hills of the country, but now they had gained the summit of a ridge, and there lay beneath them that wild coast-line, broken with crag and promontory towards the sea, and inland swelling and falling in every fanciful undulation, yellow with the furze and the wild broom, but grander for its wide expanse than many a scene of stronger features. How dear to his heart it was! How inexpressibly dear the spot that was interwoven with every incident of his life and every spring of his hope! There the green lanes he used to saunter with Alice—there the breezy downs over which they cantered — yonder the little creek where they had once sheltered from a storm: he could see the rock on which he lit a fire in boyish imitation of a shipwrecked crew! It was of Alice that every crag and cliff, every bay and inlet, spoke.

"And is all that happiness gone for ever?" cried he, as he stood gazing at the scene. "I wonder," thought he, "could Skeffy read her thoughts and tell me how she feels towards me? I wonder will he ever talk to her of me, and what will they say?" His cheek grew hot and red, and he muttered to himself, "Who knows but it may be in pity?" and with the bitterness of the thought the tears started to his eyes, and coursed down his cheeks.

That same book—how it rankled, like a barbed arrow, in his side!—that same book said that men are always wrong in their readings of woman—that they cannot understand the finer, nicer, more subtle springs of her action; and in their coarser appreciation they constantly destroy the interest they would give worlds to create. It was as this thought flashed across his memory the car-driver exclaimed aloud, "Ah, Master Tony, did ever you see as good a pony as yon? he's carried the minister these eighteen years, and look at him how he jogs along to-day!"

He pointed to a little path in the valley where old Dr. Stewart ambled along on his aged palfrey, the long mane and flowing tail of the beast marking him out though nigh half a mile away.

"Why didn't I think of that before?" thought Tony. "Dolly Stewart is the very one to help me. She has not been bred and brought up like Alice, but she has plenty of keen woman's wit, and she has all a sister's love for me besides. I'll just go and tell her how we parted, and I'll ask her frankly what she says to it."

Cheered by this bright idea, he pursued his way in better spirits, and soon reached the little path which wound off from the highroad through the fields to the Burnside. Not a spot there unassociated with memories, but they were the memories of early boyhood. The clump of white thorns they used to call the Forest, and where they went to hunt wild beasts; the little stream they fancied a great and rapid river, swarming with alligators; the grassy slope, where they had their house, and the tiny garden whose flowers, stuck down at daybreak, were withered before noon!—too faithful emblems of the joys they illustrated!

"Surely," thought he, "no boy had ever such a rare playfellow as Dolly; so ready to take her share in all the rough vicissitudes of a boy's pleasures, and yet to bring to them a sort of storied interest and captivation which no mere boy could ever have contributed. What a little romance the whole was—just because she knew how to impart the charm of a story to all they did and all they planned!"

It was thus thinking that he entered the cottage. So still was everything that he could hear the scratching noise of a pen as a rapid writer's hand moved over the paper. He peeped cautiously in and saw Dolly seated, writing busily at a table all strewn over with manuscript: an open book, supported by other books, lay before her, at which from time to time she glanced.

Before Tony had advanced a step she turned round and saw him. "Was it not strange, Tony?" said she, and she flushed as she spoke. "I felt that you were there before I saw you; just like long ago, when I always knew where you were hid."

"I was just thinking of that same long ago, Dolly," said he, taking a chair beside her, "as I came up through the fields. There everything is the same as it used to be when we went to seek our fortune across the sandy desert, near the Black Lake."

"No," said she, correcting; "the Black Lake was at the foot of Giant's Rock, beyond the rye-field."

"So it was, Dolly; you are right."

"Ah, Master Tony, I suspect I have a better memory of

those days than you have. To be sure, I have not had as many things happening in the meanwhile to trouble these memories."

There was a tone of sadness in her voice, very slight, very faint indeed, but still enough to tinge these few words with melancholy.

"And what is all this writing about?" said he, moving his hands through the papers. "Are you composing a book, Dolly?"

"No," said she, timidly; "I am only translating a little German story. When I was up in London, I was lucky enough to obtain the insertion of a little fairy tale in a small periodical meant for children, and the editor encouraged me to try and render one of Andersen's stories; but I am a very sorry German, and, I fear me, a still sorrier prose writer; and so, Tony, the work goes on as slowly as that bridge of ours used long ago. Do you remember when it was made, we never had the courage to pass over it! Mayhap it will be the same with my poor story, and when finished, it will remain unread."

"But why do you encounter such a piece of labour?" said he. "This must have taken a week or more!"

"A month yesterday, my good Tony; and very proud I am, too, that I did it in a month."

"And for what, in heaven's name?"

"For three bright sovereigns, Master Tony!" said she, blushing.

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said he, in deep shame and confusion. "I meant only, why did you engage on such a hard task."

"I know you didn't mean it, Tony; but I was so proud of my success as an author it would out. Yes," said she, with a feigned air of importance, "I have just disposed of my copyright; and you know, Tony, Milton did not get a great deal more for 'Paradise Lost.' You see," added she, seriously, "what with poor papa's age and his loneliness, and my own not over-great strength, I don't think I shall try (at least not soon), to be a governess again; and it behoves me to be as little as I can of a burden to him: and after thinking of various things, I have settled upon this as the best."

"What a good girl you are!" said he, and he fixed his eyes full upon her; nor did he know how admiringly till he saw that her face, her forehead, and even her neck, were crimson with shame and confusion.

"There is no such great goodness in doing what is simply one's duty," said she, gravely.

"I don't know that, Dolly."

"Come, come, Tony, you never fancied yourself a hero, just because you are willing to earn your bread, and ready to do so by some sacrifice of your tastes and habits."

The allusion recalled Tony to himself and his own cares, and after a few seconds of deep thought, he said, "I am going to make the venture now, Dolly. I am called away to London by telegraph, and am to leave to-morrow morning."

"Are you fully prepared, Tony, for the examination?"

"Luckily for me, they do not require it. Some accidental want of people has made them call in all the available fellows at a moment's warning, and in this way I may chance to slip into the service unchallenged."

"Nay, but Tony," said she, reproachfully, "you surely could face the examination?"

"I could face it just as I could face being shot at, of course, but with the same certainty of being bowled over. Don't you know, Dolly, that I never knew my grammar long ago till you had dinned it into my head; and as you never come to my assistance now, I know well what my fate would be."

"My dear Tony," said she, "do get rid once for all of the habit of underrating your own abilities: as my dear father says, people very easily make self-depreciation a plea of indolence. There, don't look so dreary; I'm not going to moralize in the few last minutes we are to have together. Talk to me about yourself."

"It was for that I came, Dolly," said he, rising and taking a turn or two up and down the room; for in truth he was sorely puzzled how to approach the theme that engaged him. "I want your aid; I want your woman's wit to help me in a difficulty. Here's what it is, Dolly," and he sat down again at her side, and took her hand in his own. "Tell me, Dolly," said he, suddenly, "is it true, as I have read somewhere, that a woman, after having made a man in love with her, will boast that she is not in the least bound to requite his affection if she satisfies herself that she has elevated him in his ambition, given a higher spring to his hope—made him, in fact, something better and nobler than his own uninspired nature had ever taught him to be? I'm not sure that I have said what I meant to say; but you'll be able to guess what I intend."

"You mean, perhaps, will a woman accept a man's love as a means of serving him without any intention of returning it?"

Perhaps he did not like the fashion in which she put his question, for he did not answer, save by a nod.

"I say yes; such a thing is possible, and might happen readily enough if great difference of station separated them."

"Do you mean if one was rich and the other poor?"

"Not exactly; because inequalities of fortune may exist between persons of equal condition."

"In which case," said he, hurriedly, "you would not call their stations unequal, would you?"

"That would depend on how far wealth contributed to the habits of the wealthier. Some people are so accustomed to affluence, it is so much the accompaniment of their daily lives, that the world has for them but one aspect."

"Like our neighbours here, the Lyles, for instance?" said he.

Dolly gave a slight start, like a sudden pang of pain, and grew deadly pale. She drew away her hand at the same time, and passed it across her brow.

"Does your head ache, dear Dolly?" asked he, compassionately.

"Slightly: it is seldom quite free of pain. You have chosen a poor guide, Tony, when there is a question of the habits of fine folk. None know so little of their ways as I do. But surely you do not need guidance. Surely you are well capable of understanding them in all their moods."

With all her attempts to appear calm and composed, her lips shook and her cheeks trembled as she spoke; and Tony, more struck by her looks than her words, passed his arm round her, and said, in a kind and affectionate voice, "I see you are not well, my own dear Dolly; and that I ought not to come here troubling you about my own selfish cares; but I can never help feeling that it's a sister I speak to."

"Yes, a sister," said she, in a faint whisper—"a sister!"

"And that your brother Tony has the right to come to you for counsel and help."

"So he has," said she, gulping down something like a sob; "but these days, when my head is weary and tired, and when—as to-day, Tony—I am good for nothing—— Tell me," said she, hastily, "how does your mother bear your going away? Will she let me come and sit with her often? I hope she will."

"That she will, and be so happy to have you, too; and only think, Dolly, Alice Lyle—Mrs. Trafford, I mean—has offered to come and keep her company sometimes. I hope you'll meet her there: how you'd like her, Dolly!"

Dolly turned away her head, and the tears, against which she

had struggled so long, now burst forth, and slowly fell along her cheek.

"You must not fancy, Dolly, that because Alice is rich and great you will like her less. Heaven knows, if humble fortune could separate us, ours might have done so."

"My head is splitting, Tony dear. It is one of those sudden attacks of pain. Don't be angry if I say good-bye; there's nothing for it but a dark room, and quiet."

"My poor dear Dolly," said he, pressing her to him, and kissing her twice on the cheek.

"No, no!" cried she, hysterically, as though to something she was answering; and then, dashing away, she rushed from the room, and Tony could hear her door shut and locked as she passed in.

"How changed from what she used to be!" muttered he, as he went his way; "I scarcely can believe she is the same! And, after all, what light has she thrown on the difficulty I put before her? Or was it that I did not place the matter as clearly as I might? Was I too guarded, or was I too vague? Well, well. I remember the time when, no matter how stupid *I* was, she would soon have found out my meaning! What a dreary thing that life of a governess must be, when it could reduce one so quick of apprehension and so ready-witted as she was to such a state as this! Oh, is she not changed!" And this was the burden of his musings as he wended his way towards home.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIR ARTHUR ON LIFE AND THE WORLD IN GENERAL.

"HERE it is at last, mother," said Tony, holding up the "despatch" as he entered the cottage.

"The order for the examination, Tony!" said she, as she turned pale.

"No, but the order to do without it, mother dear!—the order for Anthony Butler to report himself for service, without any other test than his readiness to go wherever they want to send him. It seems that there's a row somewhere—or several rows—just now. Heaven bless the fellows that got them up, for it gives them no time at the Office to go into any impertinent inquiries as to one's French, or decimal fractions, or the other qualifications deemed essential to carrying a letter-bag, and so they've sent for me to go off to Japan."

"To Japan, Tony—to Japan?"

"I don't mean positively to Japan, for Skeffy says it might be Taganrog, or Timbuctoo, or Tamboff, or some other half-known place. But no matter, mother; it's so much a mile, and something besides per day; and the short and long of it is, I am to show myself on Tuesday, the 9th, at Downing Street, there to be dealt with as the law may direct."

"It's a hasty summons, my poor Tony——"

"It might be worse, mother. What would we say to it if it were, 'Come up and be examined?' I think I'm a good-tempered fellow; but I declare to you frankly, if one of those 'Dons' were to put a question to me that I couldn't answer—and I'm afraid it would not be easy to put any other—I'd find it very hard not to knock him down! I mean, of course, mother, if he did it offensively, with a chuckle over my ignorance, or something that seemed to say, 'There's a blockhead, if ever there was one!' I know I couldn't help it!"

"Oh, Tony, Tony!" said she, deprecatingly.

"Yes, it's all very well to say Tony, Tony; but here's how it is. It would be 'all up' with me. It would be by that time decided that I was good for nothing, and to be turned back. The moment would be a triumphant one for the fellow that 'plucked'

me—it always is, I'm told—but I'll be shot if it should be all triumph to him!"

"I won't believe this of you, Tony," said she, gravely. "It's not like your father, sir?"

"Then I'd not do it, mother—at least if I could help it," said he, growing very red. "I say, mother, is it too late to go up to the Abbey and bid Sir Arthur good-bye? Alice asked me to do it, and I promised her."

"Well, Tony, I don't know how you feel about these things now, but there was a time that you never thought much what hour of the day or night it was when you went there."

"It used to be so!" said he, thoughtfully; and then added, "but I'll go, at all events, mother; but I'll not be long away, for I must have a talk with you before bed-time."

"I have a note written to Sir Arthur here; will you just give it to him, Tony, or leave it for him when you're coming away, for it wants no answer?"

"All right, mother; don't take tea till I come back, and I'll do my best to come soon."

It was a well-worn path that led from the cottage to Lyle Abbey. There was not an hour of day or night Tony had not travelled it; and as he went now, thoughts of all these long-agos would crowd on his memory, making him ask himself, Was there ever any one had so much happiness as I had in those days? Is it possible that my life to come will ever replace to me such enjoyment as that?

He was not a very imaginative youth, but he had that amount of the quality that suffices for small castle-building; and he went on, as he walked, picturing to himself what would be the boon he would ask from Fortune if some benevolent fairy were to start out from the tall ferns and grant him his wish. Would it be to be rich and titled and great, so that he might propose to make Alice his wife without any semblance of inordinate pretension? or would it not be to remain as he was, poor and humble in condition, and that Alice should be in a rank like his own, living in a cottage like Dolly Stewart, with little household cares to look after?

It was a strange labyrinth these thoughts led him into, and he soon lost his way completely, unable to satisfy himself whether Alice might not lose in fascination when no longer surrounded by all the splendid appliances of that high station she adorned, or whether her native gracefulness would not be far more attractive when her life became ennobled by duties. A continual comparison of Alice and Dolly would rise to his mind; nothing could

be less alike, and yet there they were, in incessant juxtaposition; and while he pictured Alice in the humble manse of the minister, beautiful as he had ever seen her, he wondered whether she would be able to subdue her proud spirit to such lowly ways, and make of that thatched cabin the happy home that Dolly had made it. His experiences of life were not very large, but one lesson they had certainly taught him—it was, to recognize in persons of condition, when well brought up, a great spirit of accommodation. In the varied company of Sir Arthur's house he had constantly found that no one submitted with a better grace to accidental hardships than he whose station had usually elevated him above the risks of their occurrence, and that in the chance roughings of a sportman's life it was the born gentleman—Sybarite it might be at times—whose temper best sustained him in all difficulties, and whose gallant spirit bore him most triumphantly over the crosses and cares that beset him. It might not be a very logical induction that led him to apply this reasoning to Alice, but he did so, and in so doing he felt very little how the time went over, till he found himself on the terrace at Lyle Abbey.

Led on by old habit, he passed in without ringing the bell, and was already on his way to the drawing-room when he met Hailes the butler.

In the midst of a shower of rejoicings at seeing him again—for he was a great favourite with the household—Hailes hastened to show him into the dining-room, where, dinner over, Sir Arthur sat in an easy-chair at the fire, alone, and sound asleep. Roused by the noise of the opening door, Sir Arthur started and looked up; nor was he indeed very full awake while Tony blundered out his excuses for disturbing him.

"My dear Tony, not a word of this. It is a real pleasure to see you. I was taking a nap, just because I had nothing better to do. We are all alone here now, and the place feels strange enough in the solitude. Mark gone—the girls away—and no one left but Lady Lyle and myself. There's your old friend; that's some of the '32 claret; fill your glass, and tell me that you are come to pass some days with us."

"I wish I was, sir; but I have come to say good-bye. I'm off to-morrow for London."

"For London! What! another freak, Tony?"

"Scarcely a freak, sir," said he, smiling. "They've telegraphed to me to come up and report myself for service at the Foreign Office."

"As a Minister, eh?"

"No, sir; a Messenger."

"An excellent thing, too; a capital thing. A man must begin somewhere, you know. Every one is not as lucky as I was, to start with close on twelve hundred a year. I wasn't twenty when I landed at Calcutta, Tony—a mere boy!" Here the baronet filled his glass, and drank it off with a solemnity that seemed as if it were a silent toast to his own health, for in his own estimation he merited that honour, very few men having done more for themselves than he had; not that he had not been over-grateful, however, to the fortune of his early days in this boastful acknowledgment, since it was in the humble capacity of an admiral's secretary—they called them clerks in those days—he had first found himself in the Indian Ocean, a mere accident leading to his appointment on shore and all his subsequent good fortune. "Yes, Tony," continued he, "I started at what one calls a high rung of the ladder. It was then I first saw your father; he was about the same age as you are now. He was on Lord Dollington's staff. Dear me, dear me! it seems like yesterday;" and he closed his eyes, and seemed lost in reverie; but if he really felt like yesterday, he would have remembered how insolently the superb aide-de-camp treated the meek civilian of the period, and how immeasurably above Mr. Lyle of those days stood the haughty Captain Butler of the Governor-General's staff.

"The soldiers used to fancy they had the best of it, Tony; but, I take it, we civilians won the race at last;" and his eyes ranged over the vast room, with the walls covered by pictures, and the sideboard loaded with massive plate, while the array of decanters on the small spider-table beside him suggested largely of good living.

"A very old friend of mine, Jos. Hughes—he was salt assessor at Bussorabad—once remarked to me, 'Lyle,' said he, 'a man must make his choice in life, whether he prefers a brilliant start or a good finish, for he cannot have both.' Take your pleasure when young, and you must consent to work when old; but if you set out vigorously, determined to labour hard in early life, when you come to my age, Tony, you may be able to enjoy your rest"—and here he waved his hand round, as though to show the room in which they sat—"to enjoy your rest, not without dignity."

Tony was an attentive listener, and Sir Arthur was flattered, and went on. "I am sincerely glad to have the opportunity of these few moments with you. I am an old pilot, so to say, on the sea you are about to venture upon; and really, the great

difficulty young fellows have in life is, that the men who know the whole thing from end to end will not be honest in giving their experiences. There is a certain 'snobbery'—I have no other word for it—that prevents their confessing to small beginnings. They don't like telling how humble they were at the start; and what is the consequence? The value of the whole lesson is lost! Now, I have no such scruples, Tony. Good family connections and relatives of influence I had; I cannot deny it. I suppose there are scores of men would have coolly sat down and said to their right honourable cousin or their noble uncle, 'Help me to this—get me that;' but such was not my mode of procedure. No, sir; I resolved to be my own patron, and I went to India."

When Sir Arthur said this, he looked as though his words were: "I volunteered to lead the assault. It was I that was first up the breach." "But, after all, Tony, I can't get the boys to believe this." Now these boys were his three sons, two of them middle-aged, white-headed, liverless men in Upper India, and the third that gay dragoon with whom we have had some slight acquaintance.

"I have always said to the boys, 'Don't lie down on your high relations.'" Had he added that they would have found them a most uncomfortable bed, he would not have been beyond the truth. "Do as I did, and see how gladly, ay, and how proudly, they will recognize you. I say the same to you, Tony. You have, I am told, some family connections that might be turned to account?"

"None, sir; not one," broke in Tony, boldly.

"Well, there is that Sir Omerod Butler. I don't suspect he is a man of much actual influence. He is, I take it, a bygone."

"I know nothing of him; nor do I want to know anything of him," said Tony, pushing his glass from him, and looking as though the conversation were one he would gladly change for any other topic; but it was not so easy to tear Sir Arthur from such a theme, and he went on.

"It would not do for you, perhaps, to make any advances towards him."

"I should like to see myself!" said Tony, half choking with angry impatience.

"I repeat, it would not do for *you* to take this step; but if you had a friend—a man of rank and station—one whose position your uncle could not but acknowledge as at least the equal of his own——"

"He could be no friend of mine who should open any negotiations on my part with a relation who has treated my mother so uncourteously, sir."

"I think you are under a mistake, Tony. Mrs. Butler told me that it was rather her own fault than Sir Omerod's that some sort of reconciliation was not effected. Indeed, she once showed me a letter from your uncle when she was in trouble about those Canadian bonds."

"Yes, yes, I know it all," said Tony, rising, as if all his patience was at last exhausted. "I have read the letter you speak of; he offered to lend her five or six hundred pounds, or to give it, I forget which; and he was to take *me*"—here he burst into a fit of laughter that was almost hysterical in its harsh mockery—"to take *me*. I don't know what he was to do with me, for I believe he has turned Papist, Jesuit, or what not; perhaps I was to have been made a priest, or a friar; at all events I was to have been brought up dependent on his bounty—a bad scheme for each of us. He would not have been very proud of his protégé; and, if I know myself, I don't think I'd have been very grateful to my protector. My dear mother, however, had too much of the mother in her to listen to it, and she told him so, perhaps too plainly for his refined notions in matters of phraseology; for he frumped and wrote no more to us."

"Which is exactly the reason why a friend, speaking from the eminence which a certain station confers, might be able to place matters on a better and more profitable footing."

"Not with *my* consent, sir, depend upon it," said Tony, fiercely.

"My dear Tony, there is a vulgar adage about the impolicy of quarrelling with one's bread-and-butter; but how far more reprehensible would it be to quarrel with the face of the man who cuts it?"

It is just possible that Sir Arthur was as much mystified by his own illustration as was Tony, for each continued for some minutes to look at the other in a state of hopeless bewilderment. The thought of one mystery, however, recalled another, and Tony remembered his mother's note.

"By the way, sir, I have a letter here for you from my mother," said he, producing it.

Sir Arthur put on his spectacles leisurely, and began to peruse it. It seemed very brief, for in an instant he had returned it to his pocket.

"I conclude you know nothing of the contents of this?" said he, quietly.

"Nothing whatever."

"It is of no consequence. You may simply tell Mrs. Butler from me that I will call on her by an early day; and now, won't

you come and have a cup of tea? Lady Lyle will expect to see you in the drawing-room."

Tony would have refused, if he knew how; even in his old days he had been less on terms of intimacy with Lady Lyle than any others of the family, and she had at times a sort of dignified stateliness in her manner that checked him greatly.

"Here's Tony Butler come to take a cup of tea with you, and say good-bye," said Sir Arthur, as he led him into the drawing-room.

"Oh, indeed! I am too happy to see him," said she, laying down her book; while, with a very chilly smile, she added, "and where is Mr. Butler bound for this time?" And simple as the words were, she contrived to impart to them a meaning as though she had said, "What new scheme or project has he now? What wild-goose chase is he at present engaged in?"

Sir Arthur came quickly to the rescue, as he said, "He's going to take up an appointment under the Crown: and, like a good and prudent lad, to earn his bread, and do something towards his mother's comfort."

"I think you never take sugar," said she, smiling faintly; "and for a while you made a convert of Alice."

Was there ever a more commonplace remark? and yet it sent the blood to poor Tony's face and temples, and overwhelmed him with confusion. "You know that the girls are both away?"

"It's a capital thing they've given him," said Sir Arthur, trying to extract from his wife even the semblance of an interest in the young fellow's career.

"What is it?" asked she.

"How do they call you? are you a Queen's messenger, or a Queen's courier, or a Foreign Office messenger?"

"I'm not quite sure. I believe we are messengers, but whose I don't remember."

"They have the charge of all the despatches to the various embassies and legations in every part of the world," said Sir Arthur, pompously.

"How addling it must be—how confusing."

"Why so? You don't imagine that they have to retain them, and report them orally, do you?"

"Well, I'm afraid I did," said she, with a little simper that seemed to say, What did it signify either way?

"They'd have made a most unlucky selection in my case," said Tony, laughing, "if such had been the duty."

"Do you think you shall like it?"

"I suppose I shall. There is so very little I'm really fit for, that I look on this appointment as a piece of rare luck."

"I fancy I'd rather have gone into the army—a cavalry regiment, for instance."

"The most wasteful and extravagant career a young fellow could select," said Sir Arthur, smarting under some recent and not over-pleasant experiences.

"The uniform is so becoming, too," said she, languidly.

"It is far and away beyond any pretension of my humble fortune, madam," said Tony, proudly, for there was an impertinent carelessness in her manner that stung him to the quick.

"Ah, yes," sighed she; "and the army, too, is not the profession for one who wants to marry."

Tony again felt his cheek on fire, but he did not utter a word as she went on, "And report says something like this of you, Mr. Butler."

"What, Tony! how is this? I never heard of it before," cried Sir Arthur.

"Nor I, sir."

"Come, come. It is very indiscreet of me, I know," said Lady Lyle; "but as we are in such a secret committee here at this moment, I fancied I might venture to offer my congratulations."

"Congratulations! on what would be the lad's ruin! Why, it would be downright insanity. I trust there is not a word of truth in it."

"I repeat, sir, that I hear it all for the first time."

"I conclude, then, I must have been misinformed."

"Might I be bold enough to ask from what quarter the rumour reached you, or with whom they mated me?"

"Oh, as to your choice, I hear she is a very nice girl indeed, admirably brought up and well educated—everything but rich; but of course that fact was well known to you. Men in her father's position are seldom affluent."

"And who could possibly have taken the trouble to weave all this romance about me?" said Tony, flushing not the less deeply that he suspected it was Dolly Stewart who was indicated by the description.

"One of the girls, I forget which, told me. Where she learned it, I forget, if I ever knew; but I remember that the story had a sort of completeness about it that looked like truth." Was it accident or intention that made Lady Lyle fix her eyes steadily on Tony as she spoke? As she did so, his colour, at first crimson, gave way to an ashy paleness, and

he seemed like one about to faint. "After all," said she, "perhaps it was a mere flirtation that people magnified into marriage."

"It was not even that," gasped he out, hoarsely. "I am overstaying my time, and my mother will be waiting tea for me," muttered he; and with some scarcely intelligible attempts at begging to be remembered to Alice and Bella, he took his leave, and hurried away.

While Tony, with a heart almost bursting with agony, wended his way towards home, Lady Lyle resumed her novel, and Sir Arthur took up the *Times*. After about half an hour's reading he laid down the paper, and said, "I hope there is no truth in that story about young Butler."

"Not a word of it," said she, dryly.

"Not a word of it! but I thought you believed it."

"Nothing of the kind. It was a lesson the young gentleman has long needed, and I was only waiting for a good opportunity to give it."

"I don't understand you. What do you mean by a lesson?"

"I have very long suspected that it was a great piece of imprudence on our part to encourage the intimacy of this young man here, and to give him that position of familiarity which he obtained amongst us; but I trusted implicitly to the immeasurable distance that separated him from our girls, to secure us against danger. That clever man of the world, Mr. Maitland, however, showed me I was wrong. He was not a week here till he saw enough to induce him to give me a warning; and though at first he thought it was Bella's favour he aspired to, he afterwards perceived it was to Alice he directed his attentions."

"I can't believe this possible. Tony would never dare such a piece of presumption."

"You forget two things, Sir Arthur. This young fellow fancies that his good birth makes him the equal of any one; and, secondly, Alice, in her sense of independence, is exactly the girl to do a folly, and imagine it to be heroic; so Maitland himself said to me, and it was perfectly miraculous how well he read her whole nature. And indeed it was he who suggested to me to charge Tony Butler with being engaged to the minister's daughter, and told me—and, as I saw, with truth—how thoroughly it would test his suspicions about him. I thought he was going to faint—he really swayed back and forwards when I said that it was one of the girls from whom I had the story."

"If I could only believe this, he should never cross the threshold again. Such insolence is, however, incredible."

"That's a man's way of regarding it; and however you sneer at our credulity, it enables us to see scores of things that your obstinacy is blind to. I am sincerely glad he is going away."

"So am I—now; and I trust, in my heart, we have seen the last of him."

"How tired you look, my poor Tony!" said his mother, as he entered the cottage and threw himself heavily and wearily into a chair.

"I *am* tired, mother—very tired and jaded."

"I wondered what kept you so long, Tony; for I had time to pack your trunk, and to put away all your things; and when it was done and finished, to sit down and sorrow over your going away. Oh, Tony dear, aren't we ungrateful creatures, when we rise up in rebellion against the very mercies that are vouchsafed us, and say, Why was my prayer granted me? I am sure it was many and many a night, as I knelt down, I begged the Lord would send you some calling or other, that you might find means of an honest living; and a line of life that wouldn't disgrace the stock you came from; and now that He has graciously heard me, here I am repining and complaining just as if it wasn't my own supplication that was listened to."

Perhaps Tony was not in a humour to discuss a nice question of ethical meaning, for he abruptly said, "Sir Arthur Lyle read your note over, and said he'd call one of these days and see you. I suppose he meant with the answer."

"There was no answer, Tony; the matter was just this—I wanted a trifle of an advance from the bank, just to give you a little money when you have to go away; and Tom M'Elwain, the new manager, not knowing me perhaps, referred the matter to Sir Arthur, which was not what I wished or intended, and so I wrote and said so. Perhaps I said so a little too curtly, as if I was too proud, or the like, to accept a favour at Sir Arthur's hands; for he wrote me a very beautiful letter—it went home to my heart—about his knowing your father long ago, when they were both lads, and had the wide world before them; and alluding very touchingly to the Lord's bounties to himself—blessing him with a full garner."

"I hope you accepted nothing from him," broke in Tony, roughly.

"No, Tony: for it happened that James Hewson, the apothecary, had a hundred pounds that he wanted to lay out on a safe

mortgage, and so I took it, at six per cent, and gave him over the deeds of the little place here."

"For a hundred pounds! Why, it's worth twelve hundred at least, mother!"

"What a boy it is!" said she, laughing. "I merely gave him his right to claim the one hundred that he advanced, Tony dear; and my note to Sir Arthur was to ask him to have the bond, or whatever it is called, rightly drawn up and witnessed, and at the same time to thank him heartily for his own kind readiness to serve me."

"I hate a mortgage, mother. I don't feel as if the place was our own any longer."

"Your father's own words, eighteen years ago, when he drew all the money he had out of the agent's hands, and paid off the debt on this little spot here. 'Nelly,' said he, 'I can look out of the window now, and not be afraid of seeing a man coming up the road to ask for his interest.'"

"It's the very first thing I'll try to do, is to pay off that debt, mother. Who knows but I may be able before the year is over! But I am glad you didn't take it from Sir Arthur."

"You're as proud as your father, Tony," said she, with her eyes full of tears; "take care that you're as good as he was, too."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CORNER IN DOWNING STREET.

When Tony Butler found himself inside of the swinging glass-door at Downing Street, and in presence of the august Mr. Willis, the porter, it seemed as if all the interval since he had last stood in the same place had been a dream. The head-porter looked up from his *Times*, and with a severity that showed he had neither forgotten nor forgiven, said, "Messengers' room—first pair—corridor—third door on the left." There was an unmistakable dignity in the manner of the speaker which served to show Tony not merely that his former offence remained unpardoned, but that his entrance into public life had not awed or impressed in any way the stern official.

Tony passed on, mounted the stairs, and sauntered along a very ill-kept corridor, not fully certain whether it was the third, fourth, or fifth door he was in search of, or on what hand. After about half an hour passed in the hope of seeing one to direct him, he made bold to knock gently at a door. To his repeated summons no answer was returned, and he tried another, when a shrill voice cried "Come in." He entered, and saw a slight, sickly-looking youth, very elaborately dressed, seated at a table writing. The room was a large one, very dirty, ill-furnished, and disorderly.

"Well, what is it?" asked the young gentleman, without lifting his head or his eyes from the desk.

"Could you tell me," said Tony, courteously, "where I ought to go? I'm Butler, an extra messenger, and I have been summoned to attend and report here this morning."

"All right; we want you," said the other, still writing; "wait an instant." So saying, he wrote on for several minutes at a rapid pace, muttering the words as his pen traced them; at last he finished, and, descending from his high seat, passed across the room, opened a door, which led into another room, and called out,—

"The messenger come, sir!"

"Who is he?" shouted a very harsh voice.

"First for Madrid, sir," said the youth, examining a slip of paper he had just taken from his pocket.

"His name?" shouted out the other again.

"Poynder, sir."

"I beg your pardon," suggested Tony, mildly. "I'm Butler, not Poynder."

"Who's talking out there—what's that uproar?" screamed the voice, very angrily.

"He says he's not for Madrid, sir. It's a mistake," cried the youth.

"No; you misunderstand me," whispered Tony. "I only said I was not Poynder.

"He says he's in Poynder's place."

"I'll stop this system of substitutes!" cried the voice. "Send him in here."

"Go in there," said the youth, with a gesture of his thumb, and his face at the same time wore an expression which said as plain as any words could have spoken, "And you'll see how you like it."

As Tony entered, he found himself standing face to face to the awful official, Mr. Brand, the same who had reported to the Minister his intended assault upon Willis the porter. "Aw! what's all this about?" said Mr. Brand, pompously. "You are Mr.—Mr.——"

"Mr. Butler," said Tony, quietly, but with an air of determination.

"And instead of reporting yourself, you come here to say that you have exchanged with Poynder."

"I never heard of Poynder till three minutes ago."

"You want, however, to take his journey, sir. You call yourself first for Madrid?"

"I do nothing of the kind. I have come here because I got a telegram two days ago. I know nothing of Poynder, and just as little about Madrid."

"Oh—aw! you're Butler! I remember all about you now; there is such a swarm of extras appointed, that it's impossible to remember names or faces. You're the young gentleman who—who; yes, yes, I remember it all; but have you passed the civil-service examiners?"

"No; I was preparing for the examination when I received that message, and came off at once."

"Well, you'll present yourself at Burlington House. Mr. Blount will make out the order for you; you can go up the latter end of this week, and we shall want you immediately."

"But I am not ready. I was reading for this examination when your telegram came, and I set off at the instant."

"Blount, Mr. Blount!" screamed out the other, angrily; and as the affrighted youth presented himself, all pale and trembling, he went on, "What's the meaning of this, sir? You first attempt to pass this person off for Poynder: and when that scheme fails, you endeavour to slip him into the service without warrant or qualification. He tells me himself he knows nothing."

"Very little, certainly, but I don't remember telling you so," said Tony.

"And do you imagine, sir, that a bravado about your ignorance is the sure road to advancement? I can tell you, young gentleman, that the days of mighty patronage are gone by; the public require to be served with competent officials. We are not in the era of Castlereaghs and Vansittarts. If you can satisfy the Commissioners, you may come back here; if you cannot, you may go back to—to whatever life you were leading before, and were probably most fit for. As for you, Mr. Blount, I told you before that on the first occasion of your attempting to exercise here that talent for intrigue on which you pride yourself, and of which Mr. Vance told me you were a proficient, I should report you. I now say, sir—and bear in mind I say so openly, and to yourself, and in presence of your friend here—I shall do so this day."

"May I explain, sir?"

"You may not, sir—withdraw!" The wave of the hand that accompanied this order evidently included Tony, but he held his ground undismayed, while the other fell back, overwhelmed with shame and confusion.

Not deigning to be aware of Tony's continued presence in the room, Mr. Brand again addressed himself to his writing materials, when a green-cloth door at the back of the room opened, and Mr. Vance entered, and, advancing to where the other sat, leaned over his chair and whispered some words in his ear. "You'll find I'm right," muttered he, as he finished.

"And where's the Office to go to?" burst out the other, in a tone of ill-repressed passion—"will you just tell me that? Where's the Office to go—if this continues?"

"That's neither your affair nor mine," whispered Vance. "These sort of things were done before we were born, and they will be done after we're in our graves!"

"And is he to walk in here, and say, 'I'm first for service; I don't care whether you like it or not?'"

"He's listening to you all this while—are you aware of that?" whispered Vance; on which the other grew very red in the face, took off his spectacles, wiped and replaced them, and then, addressing Tony, said, "Go away, sir—leave the Office."

"Mr. Brand means that you need not wait," said Vance, approaching Tony. "All you have to do is to leave your town address here, in the outer office, and come up once or twice a-day."

"And as to this examination," said Tony, stoutly, "it's better I should say once for all——"

"It's better you should just say nothing at all," said the other, good-humouredly, as he slipped his arm inside of Tony's and led him away. "You see," whispered he, "my friend Mr. Brand is hasty."

"I should think he *is* hasty!" growled out Tony.

"But he is a warm-hearted—a truly warm-hearted man——"

"Warm enough he seems."

"When you know him better——"

"I don't want to know him better!" burst in Tony. "I got into a scrape already with just such another: he was collector for the port of Derry, and I threw him out of the window, and all the blame was laid upon me!"

"Well, that certainly was hard," said Vance, with a droll twinkle of his eye—"I call that very hard."

"So do I, after the language he used to me, saying all the while, 'I'm no duellist—I'm not for a saw-pit, with coffee and pistols for two,' and all that vulgar slang about murder and suchlike."

"And was he much hurt?"

"No; not much. It was only his collar-bone and one rib, I think—I forget now—for I had to go over to Skye, and stay there a good part of the summer."

"Mr. Blount, take down this gentleman's address, and show him where he is to wait; and don't——" here he lowered his voice, so that the remainder of his speech was inaudible to Tony.

"Not if I can help it, sir," replied Blount; "but if you knew how hard it is!"

There was something almost piteous in the youth's face as he spoke; and indeed Vance seemed moved to a certain degree of compassion as he said, "Well, well, do your best—do your best, none can do more."

"It's two o'clock. I'll go out and have a cigar with you, if you

don't mind," said Blount to Tony. "We're quite close to the Park here; and a little fresh air will do me good."

"Come along," said Tony, who, out of compassion, had already a sort of half-liking for the much-suffering young fellow.

"I wish Skeffy was here," said Tony, as they went downstairs.

"Do you know Skeff Damer, then?"

"Know him! I believe he's about the fellow I like best in the world."

"So do I," cried the other, warmly; "he hasn't his equal living—he's the best-hearted and he's the cleverest fellow I ever met."

And now they both set to, as really only young friends ever do, to extol a loved one with that heartiness that neither knows limit nor measure. What a good fellow he was—how much of this, without the least of that—how unspoiled too in the midst of the flattery he met with! "If you just saw him as I did a few days back," said Tony, calling up in memory Skeffy's hearty enjoyment of their humble cottage-life.

"If you but knew how they think of him in the Office," said Blount, whose voice actually trembled as he touched on the holy of holies.

"Confound the Office!" cried Tony. "Yes; don't look shocked. I hate that dreary old house, and I detest the grim old fellows inside of it."

"They're severe, certainly," muttered the other, in a deprecatory tone.

"Severe isn't the name for it. They insult—they outrage—that's what they do. I take it that you and the other young fellows here are gentlemen, and I ask, Why do you bear it—why do you put up with it? Perhaps you like it, however."

"No; we don't like it," said he, with an honest simplicity.

"Then, I ask again, why do you stand it?"

"I believe we stand it just because we can't help it."

"Can't help it!"

"What *could* we do? What would *you* do?" asked Blount.

"I'd go straight at the first man that insulted me, and say, Retract that, or I'll pitch you over the banisters."

"That's all very fine with you fellows who have great connections and powerful relatives ready to stand by you and pull you out of any scrape, and then, if the worst comes, have means

enough to live without work. That will do very well for you and Skeffy. Skeffy will have six thousand a-year one of these days. No one can keep him out of Digby Damer's estate; and you, for aught I know, may have more."

"I haven't sixpence, nor the expectation of sixpence in the world. If I am plucked at this examination I may go and enlist, or turn navvy, or go and sweep away the dead leaves like that fellow yonder."

"Then take my advice, and don't go up."

"Go up, where?"

"Don't go up to be examined; just wait here in town; don't show too often at the office, but come up of a morning about twelve—I'm generally down here by that time. There will be a great press for messengers soon, for they have made a regulation about one going only so far, and another taking up his bag and handing it on to a third; and the consequence is, there are three now stuck fast at Marseilles, and two at Belgrade, and all the Constantinople despatches have gone round by the Cape. Of course, as I say, they'll have to alter this, and then we shall suddenly want every fellow we can lay hands on; so all you have to do is just to be ready, and I'll take care to start you at the first chance."

"You're a good fellow," cried Tony, grasping his hand; "if you only knew what a bad swimmer it was you picked out of the water."

"Oh, I can do that much at least," said, he modestly, "though I'm not a clever fellow like Skeffy; but I must go back, or I shall 'catch it.' Look in the day after to-morrow."

"And let us dine together; that is, you will dine with me," said Tony. The other acceded freely and they parted.

That magnetism by which young fellows are drawn instantaneously towards each other, and feel something that, if not friendship, is closely akin to it, never repeats itself in after life. We grow more cautious about our contracts as we grow older. I wonder do we make better bargains?

If Tony was then somewhat discouraged by his reception at the Office, he had the pleasure of thinking he was compensated in that new-found friend who was so fond of Skeffy, and who could talk away as enthusiastically about him as himself. "Now for M'Gruder and Canon Row, wherever that may be," said he, as he sauntered along; "I'll certainly go and see him, if only to shake hands with a fellow that showed such 'good blood.'" There was no one quality which Tony could prize higher than this. The man who could take a thrashing in good

part, and forgive him who gave it, must be a fine fellow he thought; and I'm not disposed to say he was wrong.

The address was 27, Cannon Street, City; and it was a long way off, and the day somewhat spent when he reached it.

"Mr. M'Gruder?" asked Tony, of a blear-eyed man, at a small faded desk in a narrow office.

"Inside!" said he, with a jerk of his thumb; and Tony pushed his way into a small room, so crammed with reams of paper that there was barely space to squeeze a passage to a little writing-table next the window.

"Well, sir, your pleasure?" said M'Gruder, as Tony came forward.

"You forget me, I see; my name is Butler."

"Eh! what! I ought not to forget you," said he, rising, and grasping the other's hand warmly; "how are you? when did you come up to town? You see the eye is all right; it was a bit swollen for more than a fortnight, though. Hech, sirs! but you have hard knuckles of your own."

It was not easy to apologize for the rough treatment he had inflicted, and Tony blundered and stammered in his attempts to do so; but M'Gruder laughed it all off with perfect good-humour, and said, "My wife will forgive you too, one of these days, but not just yet; and so we'll go and have a bit o' dinner our two selves down the river. Are you free to-day?"

Tony was quite free and ready to go anywhere; and so away they went, at first by river steamer and then by a cab, and then across some low-lying fields to a small solitary house close to the Thames—"Shads, chops, and fried-fish house," over the door, and a pleasant odour of each around the premises.

"Ain't we snug here? no tracking a man this far," said M'Gruder, as he squeezed into a bench behind a fixed table in a very small room. "I never heard of the woman that ran her husband to earth down here."

That this same sense of security had a certain value in M'Gruder's estimation was evident, for he more than once recurred to the sentiment as they sat at dinner.

The tavern was a rare place for "hollands," as M'Gruder said; and they sat over a peculiar brew for which the house was famed, but of which Tony's next day's experiences do not encourage me to give the receipt to my readers. The cigars, too, albeit innocent of duty, might have been better; but all these, like some other pleasures we know of, only were associated with sorrow in the future. Indeed, in the cordial freedom that bound them they thought very little of either. They

had grown to be very confidential; and M'Gruder, after inquiring what Tony proposed to himself by way of a livelihood, gave him a brief sketch of his own rise from very humble beginnings to a condition of reasonably fair comfort and sufficiency.

"I'm in rags, ye see, Mr. Butler," said he, "my father was in rags before me."

"In rags!" cried Tony, looking at the stout sleek broadcloth beside him.

"I mean," said the other, "I'm in the rag trade, and we supply the paper-mills; and that's why my brother Sam lives away in Italy. Italy is a rare place for rags—I take it they must have no other wear, for the supply is inexhaustible—and so Sam lives in a seaport they call Leghorn; and the reason I speak of it to you is, that if this messenger trade breaks down under you, or that ye'd not like it, there's Sam there would be ready and willing to lend you a hand; he'd like a fellow of o' your stamp, that would go down amongst the wild places on the coast, and care little about the wild people that live in them. Mayhap this would be beneath you, though?" said he, after a moment's pause.

"I'm above nothing at this moment except being dependent; I don't want to burden my mother."

"Dolly told us about your fine relations, and the high and mighty folk ye belong to."

"Ay, but they don't belong to me—there's the difference," said Tony, laughing; then added, in a more thoughtful tone, "I never suspected that Dolly spoke of me."

"That she did, and very often too. Indeed I may say that she talked of very little else. It was Tony this and Tony that; and Tony went here and Tony went there; till one day Sam could bear it no longer—for you see Sam was mad in love with her, and said over and over again that he never met her equal. Sam says to me, 'Bob,' says he, 'I can't bear it any more.' 'What is it," says I, 'that you can't bear?'—for I thought it was something about the drawback duty on mixed rags he was meaning. But no, sirs; it was that he was wild wi' jealousy, and couldn't bear her to be a-talkin' about you. 'I think,' says he, 'if I could meet that same Tony, I'd crack his neck for him.'"

"That was civil, certainly!" said Tony, dryly.

"'And as I can't do that, I'll just go and ask her what she means by it all, and if Tony's her sweetheart?'"

"He did not do that!" Tony cried, half angrily.

"Yes, but he did though; and what for no? You wouldn't have a man lose his time pricing a bale of goods when another had bought them? If she was in treaty with you, Mr. Butler, where was the use of Sam spending the day trying to catch a word wi' her? So, to settle the matter at once, he overtook her one morning going to early meeting with the children, and he had it out."

"Well, well?" asked Tony, eagerly.

"Well, she told him there never was anything like love between herself and you; that you were aye like brother and sister; that you knew each other from the time you could speak; that of all the wide world she did not know any one so well as you; and then she began to cry, and cried so bitterly that she had to turn back home again, and go to her room as if she was taken ill; and that's the way Mrs. M'Gruder came to know what Sam was intending. She never suspected it before; but, hech sirs! if she didn't open a broadside on every one of us! And the upshot was, Dolly was packed off home to her father; Sam went back to Leghorn; and there's Sally and Maggie going back in everything ever they learned—for it ain't every day you pick up a lass like that for eighteen pounds a-year, and her washing."

"But did he ask her to marry him?" cried Tony.

"He did. He wrote a letter—a very good and sensible letter, too—to her father. He told him that he was only a junior, with a small share, but that he had saved enough to furnish a house, and that he hoped, with industry and care and thrifty ways, he would be able to maintain a wife decently and well; and he referred to Dr. Forbes of Auchterlonie for a character of him; and I backed it myself, saying, in the name of the house, it was true and correct."

"What answer came to this?"

"A letter from the minister, saying that the lassie was poorly, and in so delicate a state of health, it would be better not to agitate her by any mention of this kind for the present; meanwhile he would take up his information from Dr. Forbes, whom he knew well; and if the reply satisfied him he'd write again to us in the course of a week or two; and Sam's just waiting patiently for his answer, and doing his best, in the meanwhile, to prepare, in case it's a favourable one."

Tony fell into a reverie. That story of a man in love with one it might never be his destiny to win, had its own deep significance for him. Was there any grief, was there any misery, to compare with it? And although Sam M'Gruder, the

junior partner in the rag trade, was not a very romantic sort of character, yet did he feel an intense sympathy for him. They were both sufferers from the same malady—albeit Sam's attack was from a very mild form of the complaint.

"You must give me a letter to your brother," said he at length. "Some day or other I'm sure to be in Italy, and I'd like to know him."

"Ay, and he'd like to know *you*, now that he ain't jealous of you. The last thing he said to me at parting was, 'If ever I meet that Tony Butler I'll give him the best bottle of wine in my cellar."

"When you write to him next, say that I'm just as eager to take *him* by the hand, mind that. The man that's like to be a good husband to Dolly Stewart is sure to be a brother to *me*."

And they went back to town, talking little by the way, for each was thoughtful—M'Gruder thinking much over all they had been saying, Tony full of the future, yet not able to exclude the past.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MR. BUTLER FOR DUTY ON ——.

"I SUPPOSE M'Gruder's right," muttered Tony, as he sauntered away drearily from the door at Downing Street, one day in the second week after his arrival in London. "A man gets to feel very like a 'flunkey,' coming up in this fashion each morning 'for orders.' I am more than half-disposed to close with his offer and go 'into rags' at once."

If he hesitated, he assured himself, very confidently too, that it was not from the name or nature of the commercial operation. He had no objection to trade in rags any more than in hides, or tallow, or oakum, and some gum which did not "breathe of Araby the blest." He was sure that it could not possibly affect his choice, and that rags were just as legitimate and just as elevating a speculation as sherry from Cadiz or silk from China. He was ingenious enough in his self-discussions; but, somehow, though he thought he could tell his mother frankly and honestly the new trade he was about to embark in, for the life of him he could not summon courage to make the communication to Alice. He fancied her, as she read the avowal, repeating the word "rags," and, while her lips trembled with the coming laughter, saying, "What in the name of all absurdity led him to such a choice?" And what a number of vapid and tasteless jokes would it provoke! "Such snobbery as it all is," cried he, as he walked the room angrily; "as if there was any poetry in cotton bales, or anything romantic in molasses, and yet I might engage in these without reproach, without ridicule. I think I ought to be above such considerations. I do think my good blood might serve to assure me, that in whatever I do honourably, honestly, and avowedly, there is no derogation."

But the snobbery was stronger than he wotted of; for, do what he would, he could not frame the sentence in which he should write the tidings to Alice, and yet he felt that there would be a degree of meanness in the non-avowal infinitely more intolerable.

While he thus chafed and fretted, he heard a quick step

mounting the stair, and at the same instant his door was flung open, and Skeffy Damer rushed towards him and grasped both his hands.

"Well, old Tony, you scarcely expected to see me here, nor did I either thirty hours ago, but they telegraphed for me to come at once. I'm off for Naples."

"And why to Naples?"

"I'll tell you, Tony," said he, confidentially; "but remember this is for yourself alone. These things mustn't get abroad; they are Cabinet secrets, and not known out of the Privy Council."

"You may trust me," said Tony; and Skeffy went on.

"I'm to be attached there," said he, solemnly.

"What do you mean by attached?"

"*I*'m going there officially. They want me at our Legation. Sir George Home is on leave, and Mecklam is Chargé d'Affaires; of course every one knows what that means."

"But *I* don't," said Tony, bluntly.

"It means being bullied, being jockeyed, being out-manœuvred, laughed at by Brennier, and derided by Caraffa. Mecklam's an ass, Tony, that's the fact, and they know it at the Office, and I'm sent out to steer the ship."

"But what do *you* know about Naples?"

"I know it just as I know the Ecuador question—just as I know the Mouth of the Danube question—as I know the slave treaty with Portugal, and the Sound dues with Denmark, and the right of search, and the Mosquito frontier, and everything else that is pending throughout the whole globe. Let me tell you, old fellow, the others—the French, the Italians, and the Austrians—know me as well as they know Palmerston. What do you think Walewski told Lady Pancroft the day Cavour went down to Vichy to see the Emperor? They held a long conversation at a table where there were writing materials, and Cavour has an Italian habit of scribbling all the time he talks, and he kept on scratching with a pen on a sheet of blotting-paper, and what do you think he wrote?—the one word, over and over again, Skeff, Skeff—nothing else. 'Which led us,' says Walewski, 'to add, Who or what was Skeff? when they told us he was a young fellow'—these are his own words—'of splendid abilities in the Foreign Office;' and if there is anything remarkable in Cavour, it is the way he knows and finds out the coming man."

"But how could he have heard of you?"

"These fellows have their spies everywhere, Tony. Gortchakoff has a photograph of me, with two words in Russian under-

neath, that I got translated, and that mean 'infernally dangerous'—*tanski serateztrakoff*, infernally dangerous!—over his stove in his study. You're behind the scenes now, Tony, and it will be rare fun for you to watch the newspapers and see how differently things will go on at Naples after I arrive there."

"Tell me something about home, Skeffy; I want to hear about Tilney. Whom did you leave there when you came away?"

"I left the Lyles, Alice and Bella—none else. I was to have gone back with them to Lyle Abbey if I had stayed till Monday, and I left them, of course, very disconsolate, and greatly put out."

"I suppose you made up to Alice. I thought you would," said Tony, half sulkily.

"No, old fellow, you do me wrong; that's a thing I never do. As I said to Ernest Palfi about Pauline Esterhazy, I'll take no unfair advantage—I'll take no steps in your absence; and Alice saw this herself."

"How do you mean? Alice saw it?" said Tony, reddening.

"She saw it, for she said to me one day, 'Mr. Damer, it seems to me you have very punctilious notions on the score of friendship.'

"'I have,' said I! 'you're right there.'

"'I thought so,' said she."

"After all," said Tony, in a half-dogged tone, "I don't see that the speech had any reference to *me*, or to any peculiar delicacy of yours with respect to me."

"Ah, my poor Tony, you have a deal to learn about women and their ways! By good luck fortune has given you a friend—the one man—I declare I believe what I say—the one man in Europe that knows the whole thing; as poor Balzac used to say, '*Cher* Skeffy, what a fellow you would be if you had my pen!' He was a vain creature, Balzac; but what he meant was, if I could add his descriptive power to my own knowledge of life; for you see, Tony, this was the difference between Balzac and me. He knew Paris and the Salons of Paris, and the women who frequent these salons. I knew the human heart. It was woman, as a creature, not a mere conventionality, that she appeared to me."

"Well, I take it," grumbled out Tony, "you and your friend had some points of resemblance, too."

"Ah! you would say that we were both vain. So we were, Tony—so is every man that is the depository of a certain power. Without this same conscious thought, which you

common folk call vanity, how should we come to exercise the gift! The little world taunts us with the very quality that is the essence of our superiority."

"Had Bella perfectly recovered? was she able to be up and about?"

"Yes, she was able to take carriage airings, and to be driven about in a small phaeton by the neatest whip in Europe."

"Mr. Skeff Damer, eh?"

"The same. Ah, these drives, these drives! What delicious memories of woodland and romance! I fell desperately in love with that girl, Tony—I pledge you my honour I did. I've thought a great deal over it all since I started for Ireland, and I have a plan, a plan for us both."

"What is it?"

"Let us marry these girls. Let us be brothers in law as well as in love. You prefer Alice—I consent. Take her, take her, Tony, and may you be happy with her!" And as he spoke he laid his hand on the other's head with a reverend solemnity.

"This is nonsense, and worse than nonsense," said Tony, angrily; but the other's temper was imperturbable, and he went on. "You fancy this is all dreamland that I'm promising you; but that is because you, my dear Tony, with many good qualities, are totally wanting in one—you have no imagination, and, like all fellows denied this gift, you never can conceive anything happening to you except what has already happened. You like to live in a circle, and you do live in a circle—you are the turnspits of humanity."

"I am a troublesome dog, though, if you anger me," said Tony, half fiercely.

"Very possibly, but there are certain men dogs never attack." And as Skeffy said this he threw forward his chest, held his head back, and looked with an air of such proud defiance that Tony lay back in a chair and laughed heartily.

"I never saw a great hulking fellow yet that was not impressed with the greatness of his stature," said Skeffy. "Every inch after five feet six takes a foot off a man's intellectual standard. It is Skeff Damer says it, Tony, and you may believe it."

"I wish you'd tell me about Tilney," said Tony, half irritably.

"I appreciate you, as the French say. You want to hear that I am not your rival—you want to know that I have not taken any ungenerous advantage of your absence. *Tonino mio*, be of

good comfort — I preferred the sister; shall I tell you why?"

"I don't want to hear anything about it."

"What a jealous dog it is, even after I have declared, on the word of a Damer, that he has nothing to apprehend from me! It was a lucky day led me down there, Tony. Don't you remember the old woman's note to me, mentioning a hundred pounds, or something like it, she had forgotten to enclose? She found the bank-note afterwards on her table, and after much puzzling with herself, ascertained it was the sum she had meant to remit me. Trifling as the incident was she thought it delicate, or high-minded, or something or other, on my part. She said 'it was so nice of me;' and she wrote to my uncle to ask if he ever heard such a pretty trait, and my uncle said he knew scores of spendthrifts would have done much the same; whereupon the old lady of Tilney, regarding me as ill-used by my relatives, declared she would do something for me; but as her good intentions were double-barrelled, and she wanted to do something also for Bella, she suggested that we might, as the Oberland peasants say, 'put our eggs in the same basket.' A day was named, too, in which we were all to have gone over to Lyle Abbey, and open negotiations with Sir Arthur, when came this confounded despatch ordering me off to Naples! At first I determined not to go—to resign—to give up public life for ever. 'What's Hecuba to him?' said I; that is, 'What signifies it to me how Europe fares? Shall I not think of Skeff Damer and his fortunes?' Bowling down dynasties and setting up nine-pin princes may amuse a man, but, after all, is it not to the tranquil enjoyments of home he looks for happiness? I consulted Bella, but she would not agree with me. Women, my dear Tony, are more ambitious than men—I had almost said, more worldly. She would not, she said, have me leave a career wherein I had given such great promise. 'You might be an ambassador one day,' said she. 'Must be!' interposed I—'must be!' My unfortunate admission decided the question, and I started that night."

"I don't think I clearly understand you," said Tony, passing his hand over his brow. "Am I to believe that you and Bella are engaged?"

"I know what's passing in your mind, old fellow; I read you like large print. You won't, you can't, credit the fact that I would marry out of the peerage. Say it frankly; out with it."

"Nothing of the kind; but I cannot believe that Bella ——"

"Ay, but she did," said Skeffy, filling up his pause, while he smoothed and caressed his very young mustaches. "Trust a woman to find out the coming man! Trust a woman to detect the qualities that insure supremacy! I wasn't there quite three weeks in all, and see if she did not discover me. What's this? Here comes an order for you, Tony," said he, as he looked into the street and recognized one of the porters of the Foreign Office. "This is the place, Trumins," cried he, opening the window and calling to the man. "You're looking for Mr. Butler, aren't you?"

"Mr. Butler on duty, Friday, 21," was all that the slip of paper contained. "There," cried Skeffy, "who knows if we shall not cross the Channel together to-night? Put on your hat and we'll walk down to the Office."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TONY WAITING FOR ORDERS.

Tony Butler was ordered to Brussels to place himself at the disposal of the Minister as an ex-messenger. He crossed over to Calais with Skeffy in the mail-boat; and after a long-night's talking, for neither attempted to sleep, they parted with the most fervent assurances of friendship.

"I'd go across Europe to thrash the fellow would say a hard word of him," muttered Tony; while Skeffy, with an emotion that made his lip tremble, said, "If the world goes hard with you, I'll turn my back on it, and we'll start for New Zealand or Madagascar, Tony, remember that—I give it to you as a pledge."

When Tony presented himself at the Legation, he found that nobody knew anything about him. They had some seven or eight months previous, requested to have an additional messenger appointed, as there were cases occuring which required frequent reference to home; but the emergency had passed over, and Brussels was once again as undisturbed by diplomatic relations as any of the Channel Islands.

"Take a lodging and make yourself comfortable, marry, and subscribe to a club if you like it," said a grey-headed attaché, with a cynical face, "for in all likelihood they'll never remember you're here." The speaker had some experiences of this sort of official forgetfulness, with the added misfortune that, when he once had summoned courage to remonstrate against it, they did remember him, but it was to change him from a first to a second-class mission—in Irish phrase, promoting him backwards—for his temerity.

Tony installed himself in a snug little quarter outside the town, and set himself vigorously to study French. In Knickerbocker's "History of New York," we read that the sittings of the Council were always measured and recorded by the number of pipes smoked by the Cabinet. In the same way might it be said, that Tony Butler's progress in Ollendorf was only to be

computed by the quantity of tobacco consumed over it. The pronouns had cost two boxes of cigars; the genders a large packet of assorted cavendish and bird's-eye; and he stood fast on the frontier of the irregular verbs, waiting for a large bag of Turkish that Skeffy wrote to say he had forwarded to him through the Office.

Why have we no statistics of the influence of tobacco on education? Why will no one direct his attention to the inquiry as to how far the Tony Butlers—a large class in the British Islands—are more moved to exertion, or hopelessly muddled in intellect, by the soothing influences of smoke?

Tony smoked on, and on. He wrote home occasionally, and made three attempts to write to Alice, who, despite his silence, had sent him a very pleasant letter about home matters. It was not a neighbourhood to afford much news; and, indeed, as she said, "they have been unusually dull of late; scarcely any visitors, and few of the neighbours. We miss your friend Skeff greatly; for, with all his oddities and eccentricities, he had won upon us immensely by real traits of generosity and highmindedness. There is another friend of yours here I would gladly know well, but she—Miss Stewart—retreats from all my advances, and has so positively declined all our invitations to the Abbey, that it would seem to imply, if such a thing were possible, a special determination to avoid us. I know you well enough, Master Tony, to be aware that you will ascribe all my ardour in this pursuit to the fact of there being an obstacle. As you once told me about a certain short cut from Portrush, the only real advantage it had was a stiff four-foot wall which must be jumped; but you are wrong, and you are unjust—two things not at all new to you. My intentions here were really good. I had heard from your dear mother that Miss Stewart was in bad health—that fears were felt lest her chest was affected. Now, as the doctors concurred in declaring that Bella must pass one winter, at least, in a warm climate, so I imagined how easy it would be to extend the benefit of genial air and sunshine to this really interesting girl, by offering to take her as a companion. Bella was charmed with my project, and we walked over to the Burnside on Tuesday to propose it in all form.

"To the shame of our diplomacy we failed completely. The old minister, indeed, was not averse to the plan, and professed to think it a most thoughtful attention on our part; but Dolly—I call her Dolly, for it is by that name, so often recurring in the discussion, I associate her best with the incident—Dolly was peremptory in her refusal. I wanted—perhaps a little unfairly—

I wanted to hear her reasons. I asked if there might not possibly be something in her objections to which we could reply. I pressed her to reconsider the matter—to take a week, two if she liked, to think over it; but no, she would not listen to my compromise; she was steady and resolute, and yet at the same time much moved. She said 'No!' but she said it as if there was a reason she should say so, while it was in direct violence to all her wishes. Mind, this is mere surmise on my part. I am speaking of one of whose nature and temperament I know nothing. I may just as easily be wrong as right. She is indeed, a puzzle to me; and one little trait of her has completely routed all my conceit in my own power of reading character. In my eagerness to overcome her objections, I was picturing the life of enjoyment and interest Italy would open to her—the charm of a land that realizes in daily life what poets and painters can only shadow forth; and in my ardour I so far forgot myself as to call her Dolly—'dear Dolly,' I said. The words overcame her at once. She grew pale, so sickly pale, that I thought she would have fainted; and as two heavy tears stood in her eyes, she said in a cold quiet voice, "I beg you will not press me any more. I am very grateful to you; but I cannot accept your offer.'

"Bella insisted on our going over to your mother, and enlisting her advocacy in the cause. I did not like the notion, but I gave way. Your dear mother, all kind as she ever is, went the same evening to the Burnside; but a short note from her the next morning showed she had no better sucess than ourselves.

"Naturally—you, at least will say so—I am ten times more eager about my plan now that it is pronounced impracticable. I have written to Dr. Stewart. I have sent papa to him; mamma has called at the cottage. I have made Dr. Reede give a written declaration that Miss Stewart's case—I quote him—'as indicated by a distinct "Bronchoffany" in the superior portion of the right lung, imperatively demands the benefit of a warm and genial climate;' and with all these *pièces de conviction* I am beaten, turned out of court, and denied a verdict.

"Have you any explanation to offer about this, Master Tony? Dolly was an old playfellow of yours, your mother tells me. What key can you give us as to her nature? Is she like what she was in those old days? and when did you cease to have these games together? I fancied—was it mere fancy?—that she grew a little red when we spoke of you. Mind, sir, I want no confessions. I want nothing from *you* but what may serve

to throw light upon *her*. If you can suggest to me any means of overcoming the objection she seems to entertain to our plan, do so; and if you cannot, please to hold your peace on this matter ever after. I wrote yesterday to Mark, who is now at Milan, to make some inquiries about Italian villa life. I was really afraid to speak to your friend Skeff, lest, as mamma said, hs should immediately offer us one of the royal palaces as a residence. No matter, he is a dear good fellow, and I have an unbounded reliance on his generosity.

"Now, a word about yourself. Why are you at Brussels? Why are you a fixed star, after telling us you were engaged as a planet? Are there any mysterious reasons for your residence there? If so, I don't ask to hear them; but your mother naturally would like to know something about you a little more explanatory than your last bulletin, that said, 'I am here still, and likely to be so.'

"I had a most amusing letter from Mr. Maitland a few days ago. I had put it into this envelope to let you read it, but I took it out again, as I remembered your great and very unjust prejudices against him. He seems to know every one and everything, and is just as familiar with the great events of politics as with the great people who mould them. I read for your mother his description of the life at Fontainebleau, and the eccentricities of a beautiful Italian Countess Castagnolo, the reigning belle there; and she was much amused, though she owned that four changes of raiment daily was too much even for Delilah herself.

"Do put a little coercion on yourself, and write me even a note. I assure you I would write you most pleasant little letters if you showed you merited them. I have a budget of small gossip about the neighbours, no particle of which shall you ever see till you deserve better of your old friend,

"Alice Trafford."

It may be imagined that it was in a very varying tone of mind he read through this letter. If Dolly's refusal was not based on her unwillingness to leave her father—and if it were, she could have said so—it was quite inexplicable. Of all the girls he had ever known, he never saw one more likely to be captivated by such an offer. She had that sort of nature that likes to invest each event of life with a certain romance; and where could anything have opened such a vista for castle-building, as this scheme of foreign travel? Of course he could not explain it; how should he? Dolly was only partly like what she used

to be long ago. In those days she had no secrets—at least none from him—now she had long dreary intervals of silence and reflection, as though brooding over something she did not wish to tell of. This was not the Dolly Stewart he used to know so well. As he re-read the letter, and came to that passage in which she tells him that if he cannot explain what Dolly's refusal is owing to, without making a confession, he need not do so, he grew almost irritable, and said, "What can she mean by this?" Surely it is not possible that Alice could have listened to any story that coupled his name with Dolly's, and should thus by insinuation charge him with the allegation? Lady Lyle had said to himself, "I heard the story from one of the girls." Was it this, then, that Alice referred to? Surely she knew him better; surely she knew how he loved her, no matter how hopelessly it might be. Perhaps women liked to give this sort of pain to those whose heart they owned. Perhaps it was a species of torture they were given to. Skeffy could tell if he were here. Skeffy could resolve this point at once, but it was too much for *him*.

As to the passage about Maitland, he almost tore the paper as he read it. By what right did he correspond with her at all? why should he write to her even such small matter as the gossip of a court? And what could Alice mean by telling him of it, unless—and oh, the bitterness of this thought!—it was to intimate by a mere passing word, the relations that subsisted between herself and Maitland, and thus convey to him the utter hopelessness of his own pretensions?

As Tony walked up and down his room, he devised a very strong, it was almost a fierce, reply to this letter. He would tell her that as to Dolly he could not say, but she might have some of his own scruples about that same position called companion. When he knew her long ago, she was independent enough in spirit, and it was by no means impossible she might prefer a less brilliant condition if unclogged with observances that might savour of homage. At all events, *he* was no fine and subtle intelligence to whom a case of difficulty could be submitted.

As for Maitland, he hated him! he was not going to conceal it in any way, His air of insolent superiority he had not forgotten, nor would he forget till he had found an opportunity to retort it. Alice might think him as amusing as she pleased. To himself the man was simply odious, and if the result of all his varied gifts and accomplishments was only to make up such a being as he was, then would he welcome the most unlettered

and uninformed clown that ever walked, rather than this mass of conceit and self-sufficiency.

He sat down to commit these thoughts to paper, and though he scrawled over seven sheets in the attempt, nothing but failure came of it. Maitland came in, if not by name, by insinuation everywhere; and, in spite of himself, he found he had got into a tone not merely querulous, but actually aggressive, and was using towards Alice an air of reproof that he almost trembled at as he re-read it.

"This will never do," cried he, as he tore up the scribbled sheets. "I'll wait till to-morrow, and perhaps I shall do better." When the morrow came, he was despatched on duty, and Alice remained unanswered.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MAJOR'S MISSION.

If my reader has been as retentive as I could wish him, he will have borne in mind that on the evening when Major M'Caskey took a very menacing leave of Norman Maitland at Paris, Count Caffarelli had promised his friend to write to General Filangieri to obtain from the King a letter addressed to Maitland in the royal hand by the title of Count of Amalfi—such a recognition being as valid an act of ennoblement as all the declarations and registrations and emblazonments of heralds and the colleges.

It had been originally intended that this letter should be enclosed to Count Ludolf, the Neapolitan envoy at Turin, where Maitland would have found it; but seeing the spirit which had now grown up between Maitland and M'Caskey, and foreseeing well what would occur whenever these two men should meet, Caffarelli, with that astuteness that never fails the Italian, determined to avert the peril by a stratagem which lent its aid to the object he had in hand. He begged the General would transmit the letter from the King, not to Turin, but to the Castello di Montanara, where Maitland had long resided, in a faraway part of Calabria, and employ as the messenger M'Caskey himself; by which means this very irritable and irritating individual might be, for a time at least, withdrawn from public view, and an immediate meeting with Maitland prevented.

It was not very difficult, without any breach of confidence, for Caffarelli to convey to Filangieri that his choice of M'Caskey for this mission was something stronger than a caprice, and that his real wish was that this fiery personage should not be at Naples when they arrived there.

A very brief note, which reached Caffarelli before he had left Paris, informed him that all he had requested had been duly done. "He gave it"—it was of the king he spoke—"he gave it at once, Carlo; only saying, with a laugh, 'One of my brothers may dispute it with him some of these days—for it gives some

privilege; but whether it be to claim the rights of the Church after high treason, or to have two wives in Lower Calabria, I don't remember; but tell your friend to avoid both murder and matrimony, at least till he returns to a more civilized region.'

"I shall send the Irish Major with the despatch, as you wish. If I understand you aright, you are not over anxious he should come back with the answer. But why not be more explicit? If you want —— remember Calabria is —— Calabria—you understand."

At first Caffarelli had intended not to show this note to Maitland; but the profound contempt which his friend exhibited for M'Caskey, proved that no sense of a debt of honour outstanding between them would lessen Maitland's satisfaction at hearing that this troublesome "cur"—so he called him—should not be yelping at his heels through the streets of Naples.

Maitland, in fact, declared that he knew of no misfortune in life so thoroughly ruinous as to be confronted in a quarrel with a questionable antagonist. From the ridicule of such a situation, he averred, the only escape was in a fatal ending: and Maitland knew nothing so bad as ridicule. Enmity in all its shapes he had faced, and could face again. Give him a foe but worthy of him, and no man ever sprang into the lists with a lighter heart: the dread of a false position was too much for him.

Leaving these two friends then at Paris, to talk, amid their lives of many dissipations, of plots and schemes and ambitions, let us betake ourselves to a very distant spot, at the extreme verge of the Continent—a little inlet on the Calabrian coast below Reggio; where, on a small promontory separating two narrow bays, stands the lone castle of Montanara. It had been originally a convent, as its vast size indicates, but was purchased and converted into a royal residence by a former king of Naples, who spent incredible sums on the buildings and the gardens. The latter especially were most costly, since they were entirely artificial—the earth having been carried from the vicinity of Naples.

The castle itself was the most incongruous mass that could be conceived—embracing the fortress, the convent, the ornate style of Venice, and the luxurious vastness of an Oriental palace, all within its walls. It may be imagined that no private fortune, however ample, could have kept in perfect order a place of such immense size, the gardens alone requiring above thirty men constantly at work, and the repairs of the sea-wall being a labour that never ended.

The present occupant, Sir Omerod Butler, lived in one small

block called the "Molo," which projected into the sea at the very end of the promontory, and was approachable on the land side by a beautiful avenue of cedars. They were of great age, and, tradition said, had been brought from Lebanon. If ruin and neglect and desolation characterized all around, no sooner had the traveller entered this shady approach than all changed to the most perfect care and culture—flowery shrubs of every kind, beds of gorgeous flowers, *pergolati* of vines leading down to the sea, and orange groves dipping their golden balls in the blue Mediterranean at every step, till the ample gate was reached; passing into which you entered a spacious court paved with variegated marble, with a massive fountain in the centre. From this court, under a pillared archway, led off all the lower rooms —great spacious chambers, with richly painted ceilings and tesselated floors. Into these was gathered the most costly furniture of the whole palace; tables and consoles of malachite and porphyry, gorgeously inlaid slabs of *lapis lazuli* and agate, cabinets of rare beauty, and objects of ancient art. Passing through these again you gained the rooms of daily habitation, arranged with all the taste and luxury of modern refinement, and distinctively marking that the cold splendour without could not attain to that sense of comfort and voluptuous ease which an age of greater indulgence requires.

The outer gate of the castle, which opened by a drawbridge over a deep moat, on the Reggio road, was little less than a mile off; and it may give some idea of the vast size of the place to state that, from that entrance to the Molo, there was a succession of buildings of one kind or other, only interrupted by areas of courtyard or garden.

When, at the close of a sultry day, Major M'Caskey presented himself at this gate, summoning the porter with a vigorous pull of the bell, he was not admitted till a very careful scrutiny showed that he was alone, and did not, besides, exhibit anything very formidable in his appearance. He was told as he passed in, that he must leave his horse at the stables beside the gate, and make the rest of his way on foot. The Major was both tired and hungry; he had been in the saddle since daybreak, had twice missed his way, and tasted no food since he set out.

"Is there much more of this confounded way to go?" asked he of his guide, as they now mounted a terrace, only to descend again.

"About a quarter of an hour will bring you to the Molo," said the other, just as ill-pleased to have the duty of escorting him. A quick glance at the fellow's face showed the Major how

hopeless it would be to expect any information from him; and though he was burning to know who inhabited this lonesome place, and why he lived there, he forebore all questioning, and went along in silence.

"There!" said his guide, at last, as they reached a great archway standing alone in a sort of lawn—"there! you follow that road to the little gate yonder, pass in, cross the garden, and you will be at the side entrance of the Molo. I don't suppose you want to enter by the grand gate?"

Major M'Caskey was not much in the habit of suffering an insolence to pass unresented; but he seemed to control himself as he drew forth his purse and took out a crown piece. "This is for your trouble, my worthy fellow," said he; "go and look for it yonder," and he jerked the piece of money over the low parapet, and sent it skimming along the sea a hundred yards off.

Though the man's lips murmured in passion, and his dark eyes flashed anger, one look at the face of his companion assured him that the safer policy was to restrain his wrath, and, touching his hat in salute, he retired without a word.

As though he felt in better temper with himself for having thus discharged this little debt, the Major stepped more briskly forward, gained the small postern, and entered a large and formal garden, the chief avenue of which showed him the gate at the extremity. It lay open, and he found himself in a large vaulted hall, from which doors led off. In doubt which course to take, he turned to seek for a bell, but there was none to be found; and after a careful search on every side, he determind to announce himself by a stout knocking at one of the doors before him.

The hollow clamour resounded through the whole building, and soon brought down two men in faded livery, half terrified, half angry at the summons.

M'Caskey, at once assuming the upper hand, a habit in which practice had made him proficient, demanded haughtily to see "the Count," their master.

"He is at dinner," said they both together.

"I wish I were so too," said the Major. "Go in and tell him that I am the bearer of a royal despatch, and desire to see him immediately."

They held counsel together in whispers for a few minutes, during which the name Maria occurred frequently between them. "We will tell the Signora Maria you are here," said one, at last.

"And who may she be?" said M'Caskey, haughtily.

"She is the Cameriera of the Countess, and the chief of all the household."

"My business is not with a waiting-woman. I have come to see the Count of Amalfi," said the Major sternly.

The men apparently knew their own duties best, and, civilly asking him to follow, they led the way up a small flight of stairs, and after traversing some scantily-furnished rooms, showed him into a pretty decorated little chamber, with two windows looking on the sea.

Having politely begged him to be seated, they left him. The Major, besides being hungry and jaded, was irritable and angry. Filangieri had told him his mission was one of importance and high trust; in fact, so much so, that it could not be confided to one less known than himself. And was this the way they received a royal envoy, sent on such an errand? While he thus fumed and chafed, he heard a door open and close, and shortly after the sweep of a woman's dress coming along the corridor; and now the step came nearer, and the door opened, and a tall, sickly-looking woman entered; but scarcely had she advanced one pace within the room when she uttered a faint scream and fainted.

The Major's first care was to turn the key in the lock, his second was to lift up the almost lifeless figure and place her on a sofa. As he did so, any emotion that his features betrayed was rather of displeasure than astonishment; and in the impatient way he jerked open the window to let the fresh air blow on her there was far more of anger than surprise.

"So, then, you are the Signora Maria, it would seem," were the first words she heard as she rallied from her swoon.

"Oh, Miles!" cried she, with an intense agony, "why have you tracked me here? Could you not have let me drag out my few years of life in peace?"

It was difficult to guess how these words affected him, or rather in how many different ways; for though at first his eyes flashed angrily, he soon gave a short jeering sort of laugh, and, throwing himself down into a chair, he crossed his arms on his breast and gazed steadily at her.

The look seemed to remind her of bygone suffering, for she turned her head away, and then covered her face with her hands.

"Signora Maria," said he, slowly—"unless indeed you still desire I should call you Mrs. M'Caskey."

"No, no—Maria," cried she, wildly; "I am but a servant—I toil for my bread, but better that than ——" She stopped,

and, after an effort to subdue her emotion, burst into tears and sobbed bitterly.

"It matters little to me, madam, what the name. The chain that ties us is just as irrevocable, whatever we choose to call ourselves. As to anything else, I do not suppose you intend to claim *me* as your husband."

"No, no, never," cried she, impetuously.

"Nor am I less generous, madam. None shall ever hear from me that you were my wife. The contract was one that brought little credit to either of us."

"Nothing but misery and misfortune to me!" said she, bitterly; "nothing else—nothing else!"

"You remind me, madam," said he, in a slow, deliberate voice, as though he were enunciating some long-resolved sentiment—"you remind me much of Josephine."

"Who is Josephine?" asked she quickly.

"I speak of the Empress Josephine, so you may perceive that I have sought your parallel in high places. She, like you, deemed herself the most unhappy of women, and all because destiny had linked her with a greatness that she could not measure."

Though her vacant stare might have assured him either that she did not understand his words, or follow their meaning, never daunted he went on.

"Yes, madam; and, like *her* husband, yours has had much to bear—levity—frivolity—and—worse."

"What are you here for? Why have you come after me?" cried she, wildly. "I swore to you before, and I swear it again, that I will never go back to you."

"Whenever you reduce that pledge to writing, madam, call on me to be your security for its due performance; be it known to you, therefore, that this meeting was an unexpected happiness to me."

She covered her face, and rocked to and fro like one in the throes of a deep suffering.

"I should be a glutton, madam, if I desired a repetition of such scenes as these; they filled eight years—eight mortal years—of a life not otherwise immemorable."

"And what have they done for *me?*" cried she, roused almost to boldness by his taunting manner.

"Made you thinner, paler, a trifle more aged, perhaps," said he, scanning her leisurely; "but always what Frenchmen would call a *femme charmante*."

The mockery seemed more than she could bear, for she sprang

to her feet, and, in a voice vibrating with passion, said, "Take care, Miles M'Caskey—take care; there are men here, if they saw me insulted, would throw you over that sea-wall as soon as look at you."

"Ring for your bravos, madam—summon your condottieri at once," said he, with an impudent laugh; "they'll have some warmer work than they bargained for."

"Oh, why not leave me in peace?—why not let me have these few years of life without more of shame and misery?" said she, throwing herself on her knees before him.

"Permit me to offer you a chair, madam," said he, as he took her hands, and placed her on a seat; "and let me beg that we talk of something else. Who is the count?—'The Onoratissimo e Pregiatissimo Signor Conte,'" for he read now from the address of a letter he had drawn from his pocket—"'Signor Conte d'Amalfi'—is that the name of the owner of this place?"

"No; it is the Chevalier Butler, formerly minister at Naples, lives here—Sir Omerod Bramston Butler."

"Ah, then I perceive it is really meant for another person! I thought it was a mode of addressing him secretly. The Count of Amalfi lives here, perhaps?"

"I never heard of him."

"Who lives here besides Sir Omerod?"

"My lady—that is, the Countess; none else."

"Who is the Countess—Countess of what, and where?"

"She is a Milanese; she was a Brancaleone."

"Brancaleone, Brancaleone! there were two of them. One went to Mexico with the Duke of Sommariva—not his wife."

"This is the other; she is married to Sir Omerod."

"She must be Virginia Brancaleone," said M'Caskey, trying to remember—"the same Lord Byron used to rave about."

She nodded an assent, and he continued,—

"Nini Brancaleone was a toast, I remember, with Wraxall and Trelawney, and the rest of us. She was the 'reason fair' of many a good glass of claret which Byron gave us, in those days before he became stingy."

"You had better keep your memories to yourself in case you meet her," said she, warningly.

"Miles M'Caskey, madam, requires very little advice or admonition in a matter that touches tact or good breeding." A sickly smile of more than half-derision curled the woman's lip, but she did not speak.

"And now let us come back to this Count of Amalfi: who is he? where is he?"

"I have told you already I do not know."

"There was a time, madam, you would have required no second intimation that it was your duty to find out."

"Ah, I remember those words but too well," cried she, bitterly. "Finding out was my task for many a year."

"Well, madam, it was an exercise that might have put a fine edge on your understanding, but, like some other advantages of your station, it slipped by you without profit. I am generous, madam, and I forbear to say more. Tell me of these people here all that you know of them, for they are my more immediate interest at present."

"I will tell you everything, on the simple condition that you never speak to me nor of me again. Promise me but this, Miles M'Caskey, and I swear to you I will conceal nothing that I know of them."

"You make hard terms, madam," said he, with a mock courtesy. "It is no small privation to be denied the pleasure of your agreeable presence, but I comply."

"And this shall be our last meeting?" asked she, with a look of imploring meaning.

"Alas, madam, if it must be!"

"Take care," cried she, suddenly; "you once by your mockery drove me to——"

"Well, madam, your memory will perhaps record what followed. I shot the friend who took up your cause. Do you chance to know of another who would like to imitate his fortune?"

"Gracious heaven!" cried she, in an agony, "has nothing the power to change your cruel nature; or are you to be hard-hearted and merciless to the end?"

"I am proud to say, madam, that Miles M'Caskey comes of a house whose motto is 'Semper M'Caskey.'"

A scornful curl of her lip seemed to show what respect she felt for the heraldic allusion; but she recovered herself quickly, and said, "I can stay no longer. It is the hour the Countess requires me; but I will come back to-morrow, without you would let me buy off this meeting. Yes, Miles, I am in earnest; this misery is too much for me. I have saved a little sum, and I have it by me in gold. You must be more changed than I can believe, or you will be in want of money. You shall have it all, every ducat of it, if you only pledge me your word never to molest me—never to follow me—never to recognise me again!"

"Madam," said he severely, "this menial station you have

descended to must have blunted your sense of honour rudely, or you had never dared to make me such a proposal. Let me see you to-morrow, and for the last time." And haughtily waving his hand, he motioned to her to leave, and she turned away, with her hands over her face, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MAJOR'S TRIALS.

Major Miles M'Caskey is not a foreground figure in this our story, nor have we any reason to suppose that he possesses any attractions for our readers. When such men—and there are such to be found on life's highway—are met with, the world usually gives them what sailors call a "wide berth, and ample room to swing in," sincerely trusting that they will soon trip their anchor and sail off again. Seeing all this, I have no pretension, nor indeed any wish, to impose his company any more than is strictly indispensable, nor dwell on his sojourn at the Molo of Montanara. Indeed, his life at that place was so monotonous and weary to himself, it would be a needless cruelty to chronicle it.

The Major, as we have once passingly seen, kept a sort of brief journal of his daily doings; and a few short extracts from this will tell us all that we need know of him. On a page of which the upper portion was torn away, we find the following:—

"Arrived at M—— on the 6th at sunset. Ruined old rookery. Open at land side, and sea defences all carried away; never could have been strong against artillery. Found Mrs. M'C. in the style of waiting-woman to a Countess Butler, formerly Nini Brancaleone. A warm interview; difficult to persuade her that I was not in pursuit of herself—a feminine delusion I tried to dissipate. She"—henceforth it is thus he always designates Mrs. M'Caskey—"she avers that she knows nothing of the Count d'Amalfi, nor has ever seen him. Went into a long story about Sir Omerod Butler, of whom I know more myself. She pretends that Nini is married to him—legally married; don't believe a word of it. Have my own suspicions that the title of Amalfi has been conferred on B. himself, for he lives estranged from England and Englishmen. Will learn all, however, before I leave.

"Roast pigeons, with tomato, a strange fish, and omelette, with Capri to wash it down; a meagre supper, but they say it shall be better to-morrow.

"7th, Wednesday.—Slept soundly and had a swim; took a sea view of the place, but could see no one about. Capital breakfast—'*Frutti di mare*' boiled in Rhine wine; fellow who waited said a favourite dish of his Excellency's, meaning Sir O. B. Best chocolate I ever tasted out of Paris. Found the *menu* for dinner on the table all right; the wine is *au choix*, and I begin with La Rose and La Veuve Cliquot. A note from her referring to something said last night; she is ill and cannot see me, but encloses an order on Parodi of Genoa, in favour of the Nobile Signor il Maggiore M'Caskey, for three thousand seven hundred and forty-eight francs, and a small tortoise-shell box, containing eighty-six double ducats in gold, so that it would seem I have fallen into a '*vrai Californie*' here. Reflected, and replied with a refusal; a M'Caskey cannot stoop to this. Reproved her for ignoring the character to whom she addressed such a proposal, and reiterated my remark of last night, that she never rose to the level at which she could rightly take in the native chivalry of my nature.

"Inquired if my presence had been announced to Sir O., and learned it had. Orders given to treat me with distinguished consideration, but nothing said of an audience.

"Pigeons again for supper, with apology; quails had been sent for to Messina, and expected to-morrow. Shot at a champagne-flask in the sea, and smoked. Sir O.'s tobacco exquisite, and the supply so ample, I am making a *petite provision* for the future.

"Full moon. Shot at the camellias out of my window. Knocked off seventeen, when I heard a sharp cry—a stray shot, I suppose. Shut the casement and went to bed.

"Thursday.—Gardener's boy—flesh-wound in the calf of the leg; hope Sir O. may hear of it and send for me.

"A glorious capon for dinner, stuffed with oysters—veritable oysters. Drank Mrs. M'C.'s health in the impression that this was a polite attention on her part. No message from Sir O.

"Friday.—A general fast; a lentil soup and a fish; good but meagre; took it out in wine and tobacco. Had the gardener's boy up, and introduced him to sherry-cobbler. The effect miraculous; danced Tarantella till the bandage came off and he fainted.

"Saturday.—Rain and wind; maccaroni much smoked; cook lays it on the chimney, that won't draw with a Levant wind. Read over my instructions again, and understand them as little as before:—'You will hold yourself at the orders of

the Count d'Amalfi till further instructions from this department.' Vague enough all this; and for anything I see, or am likely to see, of this Count, I may pass the autumn here. Tried to attract Sir O.'s attention by knocking off the oranges at top of his wall, and received intimation to fire in some other direction.

"Sunday.—Don Luigi something has come to say mass. Asked him to dinner, but find him engaged to the Countess. A dry old cove, who evidently knows everything but will tell nothing; has promised to lend me a guitar and a book or two, in return for which I have sent down three bottles of our host's champagne to his reverence.

"Monday.—Lobsters.

"Tuesday.—Somebody ill apparently; much ringing of bells and disorder. My dinner an hour late. Another appeal from Mrs. M'C., repeating her former proposal with greater energy; this feminine insistance provokes me. I might tell her that of the three women who have borne my name none but herself would have so far presumed, but I forbear. Pity has ever been the weakness of my nature; I feel its workings even as I write this. It may not carry me to the length of forgiveness, but I can compassionate; I will send her this note:—

"'MADAM,—Your prayers have succeeded; I yield. It would not be generous in me to say what the sacrifice has cost me. When a M'Caskey bends, it is an oak of the forest snaps in two. I make but one condition; I will have no gratitude. Keep the tears that you would shed at my feet for the hours of your solitary sorrow. You will, see, therefore, that we are to meet no more.

"'One of the ducats is clipped on the edge, and another discoloured as by an acid; I am above requiring that they be exchanged. Nothing in this last act of our intercourse shall prevent you remembering me as "Semper M'Caskey."

"'Your cheque should have specified Parodi & Co., not Parodi alone. To a man less known the omission might give inconvenience; this, too, however, I pardon. Farewell.'"

It was evident that the Major felt he had completed this task with befitting dignity, for he stood up before a large glass, and placing one hand within his waistcoat, he gazed at himself in a sort of rapturous veneration. "Yes," said he, thoughtfully, "George Seymour, and D'Orsay, and myself, we were men! When shall the world look upon our like again? Each in his

own style, too, perfectly distinct, perfectly dissimilar—neither of them, however, had this—neither had this," cried he as he darted a look of cat-like fierceness from his fiery grey eyes. "The Princess Metternich fainted when I gave her that glance. She had the temerity to say, 'Qui est ce Monsieur M'Caskey?' Why not ask who is Soult? Who is Wellington? Who is everybody? Such is the ignorance of a woman! Madame la princess," added he, in a graver tone, "if it be your fortune to turn your footsteps to Montpellier, walk into the churchyard there, and see the tomb of Jules de Besançon, late major of the 8th Cuirassiers, and whose inscription is in these few words—'Tué par M'Caskey.' I put up the monument myself, for he was a brave soldier, and deserved his immortality."

Though self-admiration was an attractive pastime, it palled on him at last, and he sat down and piled up the gold double ducats in two tall columns, and speculated on the various pleasures they might procure, and then he read over the draft on Parodi, and pictured to his mind some more enjoyments, all of which were justly his due, "for," as he said to himself aloud, "I have dealt generously by that woman."

At last he arose, and went out on the terrace. It was a bright starlit night, one of those truly Italian nights when the planets streak the calm sea with long lines of light, and the very air seems weary with its burden of perfume. Of the voluptuous enervation that comes of such an hour he neither knew nor asked to know. Stillness and calm to him savoured only of death; he wanted movement, activity, excitement, life, in fact—life as he had always known and always liked it. Once or twice the suspicion had crossed his mind that he had been sent on this distant expedition to get rid of him when something of moment was being done elsewhere. His inordinate vanity could readily supply the reasons for such a course. He was one of those men that in times of trouble become at once famous. "They call us dangerous," said he, "just as Cromwell was dangerous, Luther was dangerous, Napoleon was dangerous. But if we are dangerous, it is because we are driven to it. Admit the superiority that you cannot oppose, yield to the inherent greatness that you can only struggle against, and you will find that we are not dangerous—we are salutary."

"Is it possible," cried he, aloud, "that this has been a plot—that while I am here living this life of inglorious idleness the great stake is on the table—the game is begun, and the King's crown being played for?" M'Caskey knew that whether royalty

conquered or was vanquished—however the struggle ended—there was to be a grand scene of pillage. The nobles or the merchants—it mattered very little which to him—were to pay for the coming convulsion. Often and often, as he walked the streets of Naples, had he stood before a magnificent palace, or a great counting-house, and speculated on the time when it should be his prerogative to smash in that stout door, and proclaim all within it his own. "*Spolia di* M'Caskey" was the inscription that he felt would defy the cupidity of the boldest. "I will stand on the balcony," said he, "and declare, with a wave of my hand, These are mine: pass on to other pillage."

The horrible suspicion that he might be actually a prisoner all this time gained on him more and more, and he ransacked his mind to think of some great name in history whose fate resembled his own. "Could I only assure myself of this," said he, passionately, "it is not these old walls would long confine me; I'd scale the highest of them in half an hour; or I'd take to the sea, and swim round that point yonder—it's not two miles off; and I remember there's a village quite close to it." Though thus the prospect of escape presented itself so palpably before him, he was deterred from it by the thought that if no intention of forcible detention had ever existed, the fact of his having feared it would be an indelible stain upon his courage. "What an indignity," thought he, "for a M'Caskey to have yielded to a causeless dread!"

As he thus thought, he saw, or thought he saw, a dark object at some short distance off on the sea. He strained his eyes, and though long in doubt, at last assured himself it was a boat that had drifted from her moorings, for the rope that had fastened her still hung over the stern, and trailed in the sea. By the slightly moving flow of the tide towards shore she came gradually nearer, till at last he was able to reach her with the crook of his riding-whip, and draw her up to the steps. Her light paddle-like oars were on board, and M'Caskey stepped in, determined to make a patient and careful study of the place on its sea-front, and see, if he could, whether it were more of chateau or jail.

With noiseless motion he stole smoothly along, till he passed a little ruined bastion on a rocky point, and saw himself at the entrance of a small bay, at the extremity of which a blaze of light poured forth, and illuminated the sea for some distance. As he got nearer, he saw that the light came from three large windows that opened on a terrace, thickly studded with orange trees, under the cover of which he could steal on unseen, and take an observation of all within; for that the room was in-

habited was plain enough, one figure continuing to cross and recross the windows as M'Caskey drew nigh.

Stilly and softly, without a ripple behind him, he glided on till the light skiff stole under the over-hanging boughs of a large acacia, over a branch of which he passed his rope to steady the boat, and then standing up he looked into the room, now so close as almost to startle him.

CHAPTER XLI.

EAVESDROPPING.

If M'Caskey was actually startled by the vicinity in which he suddenly found himself to the persons within the room, he was even more struck by the tone of the voice which now met his ear. It was Norman Maitland who spoke, and he recognized him at once. Pacing the large room in its length, he passed before the windows quite close to where M'Caskey stood—so close, indeed, that he could mark the agitation on his features, and note the convulsive twitchings that shook his cheek.

The other occupant of the room was a lady; but M'Caskey could only see the heavy folds of her dark velvet dress as she sat apart, and so distant that he could not hear her voice.

"So, then, it comes to this!" said Maitland, stopping in his walk and facing where she sat: "I have made this wearisome journey for nothing! Would it not have been as easy to say he would not see me? It was no pleasure to me to travel some hundred miles and be told at the end of it I had come for nothing."

She murmured something inaudible to M'Caskey, but to which Maitland quickly answered, "I know all that; but why not let *me* hear this from his own lips, and let *him* hear what I can reply to it? He will tell *me* of the vast sums I have squandered and the heavy debts I have contracted; and I would tell *him* that in following his rash counsels I have dissipated years that would have won me distinction in any land of Europe."

Again she spoke; but before she uttered many words he broke suddenly in with, "No, no, no! ten thousand times no! I knew the monarchy was rotten—rotten to the very core; but I said, Better to die in the street *à cheval* than behind the arras on one's knees. Have it out with the scoundrels, and let the best man win—that was the advice *I* gave. Ask Caraffa, ask Filangieri, ask Acton, if I did not always say, 'If the king is not ready to do as much for his crown as the humblest peasant would for his cabin, let him abdicate at once.'"

She murmured something, and he interrupted her with, "Because I never did—never would—and never will trust to priestcraft. All the intrigues of the Jesuits, all the craft of the whole College of Cardinals, will not bring back confidence in the monarchy. But why do I talk of these things to you? Go back and ask him to see me. Say that I have many things to tell him; say"—and here the mockery of his voice became conspicuous—"that I would wish much to have his advice on certain points.—And why not?" cried he aloud to something she said; "has my new nobility no charm for him? Well, then, I am ready to strike a bargain with him. I owe Caffarelli two hundred and eighty thousand francs, which I mean to pay, if I take to the highway to do it. Hush! don't interrupt me. I am not asking he should pay this for me—all I want is, that he will enable me to sell that villa which he gave me some years ago beyond Caserta. Yes, the Torricella; I know all that—it was a royal present. It never had the more value in my eyes for that; and perhaps the day is not far distant when the right to it may be disputed. Let him make out my title, such as it is, so that I can sell it. There are Jews who will surely take it at one-half its worth. Get him to consent to this, and I am ready to pledge my word that he has seen the last of me."

"He gave it to you as a wedding present, Norman," said she, haughtily; and now her deep-toned voice rung out clear and strong; "and it will be an unpardonable offence to ask him this."

"Have I not told you that I shall not need forgiveness—that with this act all ends between us?"

"I will be no party to this," said she, haughtily; and she arose and walked out upon the terrace. As she passed, the lamp-light flared strongly on her features, and M'Caskey saw a face he had once known well; but what a change was there! The beautiful Nini Brancaleone—the dark-haired Norma—the belle that Byron used to toast with an enthusiasm of admiration—was a tall woman advanced in years, and with two masses of snow-white hair on either side of a pale face. The dark eyes, indeed, flashed brightly still, and the eyebrows were dark as of yore; but the beautifully formed mouth was hard and thin-lipped, and the fair brow marked with many a strong line of pain.

"You forget, perhaps," said she, after a short pause—"you forget that it is from this villa I take my title. I am Brancaleone della Torricella, and I forfeit the name when it leaves our hands."

"And do you hold to this, mother?" asked he, in a voice of sorrow, through which something of scorn was detectable.

"Do I hold to it? Of course I hold to it! You know well the value it has in his eyes. Without it he never would have consented"—she stopped suddenly, and seemed to catch herself in time to prevent the utterance of some rash avowal. "As it is," added she, "he told me so late as yesterday that he has no rest nor peace, thinking over his brother's son, and the great wrong he has done him."

"Let him think of the greater wrong he has done me!—of my youth that he has wasted, and my manhood lost and shipwrecked. But for him and his weak ambition, I had belonged to a party who would have prized my ability and rewarded my courage. I would not find myself at thirty brigaded with a set of low-hearted priests and seminarists, who have no other weapons than treachery, nor any strategy but lies. If I have squandered his fortune, he has beggared me in reputation. He does not seem to remember these things. As to him whom he would prefer to me and make his heir, I have seen him."

"You have seen him, Norman! When?—where?—how?" cried she, in wild impatience.

"Yes, I even had a plan to let the uncle meet his promising nephew. I speculated on bringing together two people more made for mutual detestation than any other two in Europe."

"It would have been a rash venture," said she, fiercely.

"If you mean for *me*, that was the very reason I thought of it. What other game than the rash one is open to a man like *me?*"

"Who ever had the safer road to fortune if he could have walked with the commonest prudence?" said she, bitterly.

"How can you say that? Talk of prudence to the man who has no fortune, no family, not even a name—no!" cried he, fiercely; for by the first Maitland I met I might be challenged to say from what stock I came. He could have saved me from all this. Nothing was ever easier. You yourself asked—ay, begged this. You told me you begged it on your knees; and I own, if I never forgave him for refusing, I have never forgiven you for the entreaty."

"And I would do it again to-day!" cried she, passionately. "Let him but acknowledge you, Norman, and he may turn me out upon the world houseless and a beggar, and I will bless him for it!"

"What a curse is on the bastard!" broke he out in a savage vehemence, "if it robs him of every rightful sentiment, and

poisons even a mother's love. Do not talk to me this way, or you will drive me mad!"

"Oh, Norman! my dear, dear Norman!" cried she passionately; "it is not yet too late."

"Too late for what?"

"Not too late to gain back his favour. When he saw the letter in the King's hand, calling you Count of Amalfi, he said, 'This looks ill for the monarchy. I have a Scotch earldom myself in my family granted by another king the day after he had lost his own crown.' Try, then, if you cannot rally to the cause those men who are so much under your influence, that as you have often told me they only wanted to be assured of your devotion to pledge their own. If *he* could believe the cause triumphant, there is nothing he would not do to uphold it."

"Yes," said he, thoughtfully, "there never lived the man who more worshipped success! The indulgences that he heaped upon myself were merely offerings to a career of insolent triumph."

"You never loved him, Norman," said she, sadly.

"Love had no share in the compact between us. He wanted to maintain a cause which, if successful, must exclude from power in England the men who had insulted him, and turned him out of office. I wanted some one who could afford to pay my debts, and leave me free to contract more. But why talk to you about these intrigues?—once more, will he see me?"

She shook her head slowly in dissent. "Could you not write to him, Norman?" said she at last.

"I will not write to a man under the same roof as myself. I have some news for him," added he, "if he cares to buy it by an audience; for I suppose he would make it an audience," and the last word he gave with deep scorn.

"Let me bring him the tidings."

"No, he shall hear them from myself, or not hear them at all. I want this villa!" cried he, passionately—"I want the title to sell it, and pay off a debt that is crushing me. Go, then, and say I have something of importance enough to have brought me down some hundred miles to tell him, something that deeply concerns the cause he cares for, and to which his counsel would be invaluable."

"And this is true?"

"Did I ever tell you a falsehood, mother?" asked he, in a voice of deep and sorrowful meaning.

"I will go," said she, after a few moments of thought, and

left the room. Maitland took a bottle of some essenced water from the table and bathed his forehead. He had been more agitated than he cared to confess; and now that he was alone, and, as he believed unobserved, his features betrayed a deep depression. As he sat with his head leaning on both hands, the door opened. "Come," said she gently—"come!" He arose and followed her. No sooner was all quiet around than M'Caskey rowed swiftly back to his quarters, and packing up hastily his few effects, made with all speed for the little bay, where was the village he had passed on his arrival, and through which led the road to Reggio. That something was "up" at Naples he was now certain, and he resolved to be soon on the field; whoever the victors, they would want *him*.

On the third evening he entered the capital, and made straight for Caffarelli's house. He met the Count in the doorway. "The man I wanted," said he, as he saw the Major. "Go into my study and wait for me."

"What has happened?" asked M'Casky in a whisper.

"Everything. The King is dead."

CHAPTER XLII.

MARK LYLE'S LETTER.

THE following letter was received at Lyle Abbey shortly after the events recorded in our last chapter had happened. It was from Mark Lyle to his sister, Mrs. Trafford:—

"HOTEL VICTORIA, NAPLES.

"My Dear Alice,

"While I was cursing my bad luck at being too late for the P. and O. steamer at Marseilles, your letter arrived deciding me to come on here. Nothing was ever more fortunate; first of all, I shall be able to catch the Austrian Lloyds at Ancona, and reach Alexandria in good time for the mail; and, secondly, I have perfectly succeeded—at least I hope so—in the commission you gave me. For five mortal days I did nothing but examine villas. I got a list of full fifty, but in the course of a little time the number filtered down to ten possible, and came at last to three that one could pronounce fairly habitable. To have health in this climate—that is to say, to escape malaria—you must abjure vegetation; and the only way to avoid tertian is to book yourself for a sunstroke. These at least were my experiences up to Tuesday last, for all the salubrious spots along the sea-shore had been long since seized on either by the King or the Church, and every lovely point of view was certain to be crowned by a royal villa or a monastery. I was coming back then on Tuesday, very disconsolate indeed from a long day's fruitless search, when I saw a perfect gem of a place standing on the extreme point of a promontory near Caserta. It was of course 'royal'—at least it belonged to a Count d'Amalfi, which title was borne by some younger branch of the Bourbons; yet as it was untenanted, and several people were working in the gardens, I ventured in to have a look at it. I will not attempt description, but just say that both within and without it realizes all I ever dreamed or imagined of an Italian villa. Marble and frescoes and fountains, terraces descending to the sea, and gardens a wilderness of orange and magnolia,

and grand old rooms, the very air of which breathed splendour and magnificence; but *à quoi bon?* dear Alice. It was a *palazotto reale*, and one could only gaze enviously at delights they could not hope to compass.

"Seeing my intense admiration of the place, the man who showed me around it said, as I was coming away, that it was rumoured that the Count would not be indisposed to sell the property. I know enough of Italians to be aware that when a stranger supposed to be rich—all English are in this catagory—is struck with anything—picture, house, or statue—the owner will always part with it at tenfold its value. Half out of curiosity, half to give myself the pretext for another morning's ramble over the delicious place, I asked where I could learn any details as to the value, and received an address as follows—'Count Carlo Caffarelli, Villino del Boschetto, Chiaja, Naples.' Caffarelli I at once remembered as the name of Maitland's friend, and in this found another reason for calling on him, since I had totally failed in all my attempts to discover M. either in London, Paris, or even here.

"The same evening I went there, and found Count Caffarelli in one of those fairy-tale little palaces which this country abounds in. He had some friends at dinner, but on reading my name, recognized me, and came out with a most charming politeness to press me to join his party. It was no use refusing; the Italian persuasivenes has that element of the irresistible about it that one cannot oppose; and I soon found myself smoking my cigar in a company of half-a-dozen people who treated me as an intimate friend.

"I may amuse you some day by some of the traits of their *bonhomie*. I must now confine myself to our more immediate interests. Caffarelli, when he found that I wanted some information about the villa, drew his arm within my own, and, taking me away from the rest, told me in strictest confidence that the villa was Maitland's—Maitland being the Conte d'Amalfi—the title having being conferred by the late King, one of the very last acts of his life.

"'And Maitland,' said I, scarcely recovering from my astonishment; 'where is he now?'

"'Within a few yards of you,' said he, turning and pointing to the closed jalousies of a room that opened on a small separately enclosed garden; 'he is there.'

"There was something like secrecy, mystery at least, in his manner as he said this, that prevented my speaking for a moment, and he went on:—'Yes, Maitland is in that room,

stretched on his bed, poor fellow; he has been severely wounded in a duel which, had I been here, should never have been fought. All this, remember, is in confidence; for it is needless to tell you Maitland is one of those men who hate being made gossip of; and I really believe that his wound never gave him one-half the pain that he felt at the bare possibility of his adventure being made town-talk. So well have we managed hitherto, that of the men you see here to-night—all of them intimate with him—one only knows that his illness is not a malaria fever.'

"'But can you answer for the same prudence and reserve on the part of the other principal?'

"'We have secured it, for the time at least, by removing him from Naples; and as the laws here are very severe against duelling, his own safety will suggest silence.'

"'Do you think Maitland would see me?'

"'I suppose he will be delighted to see you; but I will ascertain that without letting him know that I have already told you he was here. Remember, too, if he should receive you, drop nothing about the duel or the wound. Allude to his illness as fever, and leave to himself entirely the option of telling you the true story or not.'

"After a few more words of caution—less needed, if he only had known how thoroughly I understood his temper and disposition—he left me. He was back again in less than five minutes, and taking me by the arm, led me to Maitland's door. 'There,' said he, 'go in! he expects you.'

"It was only after a few seconds that I could see my way through the half-darkened room, but guided by a weak voice saying, 'Come on—here,' I approached a bed, on the outside of which in a loose dressing-gown, the poor fellow lay.

"'You find it hard to recognize me, Lyle,' said he, with an attempt to smile at the amazement which I could not by any effort repress; for he was wasted to a shadow, his brown cheeks were sunken and sallow, and his dark flashing eyes almost colourless.

"'And yet,' added he, 'the doctor has just been complimenting me on my improved looks. It seems I was more horrible yesterday.' I don't remember what I said, but he thanked me and pressed my hand—a great deal from him, for he is not certainly demonstrative; and then he pressed me to tell about you all—how you were, and what doing. He inquired so frequently, and recurred so often to Bella, that I almost suspected something between them—though, after all, I ought to have known

that this was a conquest above Bella's reach—the man who might any day choose from the highest in Europe.

"'Now a little about yourself, Maitland,' said I. 'How long have you been ill?'

"'This is the seventeenth day,' said he, sighing. 'Caffarelli of course told you fever—but here it is,' and he turned on his side and showed me a great mass of appliances and bandages. 'I have been wounded. I went out with a fellow whom none of my friends would consent to my meeting, and I was obliged to take my valet Fenton for my second, and he, not much versed in these matters, accepted the Neapolitan sword instead of the French one. I had not touched one these eight years. At all events, my antagonist was an expert swordsman—I suspect, in this style of fencing, more than my equal; he certainly was cooler, and took a thrust I gave him through the fore-arm without ever owning he was wounded till he saw me fall.'

"'Plucky fellow,' muttered I.

"'Yes, pluck he has unquestionably; nor did he behave badly when all was over, for though it was as much as his neck was worth to do it, he offered to support me in the carriage all the way back to Naples.'

"'That was a noble offer,' said I.

"'And there never was a less noble antagonist!' cried Maitland, with a bitter laugh. 'Indeed, if it ever should get abroad that I crossed swords with him, it would go near to deny me the power of demanding a similar satisfaction from one of my own rank to-morrow. Do not ask me who he is, Lyle; do not question me about the quarrel itself. It is the thinking, the brooding over these things as I lie here, that makes this bed a torture to me. The surgeon and his probes are not pleasant visitors, but I welcome them when they divert my thoughts from these musings.'

"I did my best to rally him, and get him to talk of the future, when he should be up and about again. I almost thought I had done him some little good, when Caffarelli came in to warn me that the doctors were imperative against his receiving any visitors, and I had been there then full two hours!

"'I have told Lyle,' said he, as we were leaving the room, 'that you must let him come and see me to-morrow; there are other things I want to talk over with him.'

"It was high time I should have left him, for his fever was now coming on, and Caffarelli told me that he raved throughout the whole night, and talked incessantly of places which, even in a foreign pronunciation, I knew to be in our own neighbourhood

in Ireland. The next day I was not admitted to see him. The day after that I was only suffered to pass a few minutes beside his bed, on condition, too, that he should not be allowed to speak; and to day, as it is my last in Naples, I have been with him for above an hour. I am certain, my dear Alice, that there is something at least in my suspicion about Bella, from what took place to-day. Hearing that I was obliged to leave to-night to catch the steamer at Ancona, he said, 'Lyle, I shall want a few minutes with you, alone, though, before you leave.' He said this because either the doctor or Caffarelli, or both, have been with us since our first meeting. 'Don't look gloomy, old fellow,' he added; 'I'm not going to speak about my will. It is rather of life I mean to talk, and what to do with life to make it worth living for. Meanwhile, Caffarelli has been telling me of your hunt after a villa. There is mine—the Torricella—take it. Carlo says you were greatly struck with it; and as it is really pretty, and inhabitable too, a thing rare enough with villas, I insist upon your offering it to your family. There's a sort of summer-house or "Belvedere" on the extreme point of the rock, with half a dozen little rooms; I shall keep that for myself; but tell Lady Lyle I shall not be a troublesome visitor. It will be the rarest of all events to see me there, for I shall not be long in Italy.' I was eager to ask why, or whither he was turning his steps, but he was never one to stand much questioning, and in his present state it would have been dangerous to cross him. By way of saying something—anything at the moment—I asked how were things going on here politically. He laughed his usual little quiet laugh, and called out to Caffarelli, who stood in the window. 'Come here, Carlo, and tell Lyle how we are getting on here. He wants to know if the ammunition has been yet served out for the bombardment; or are you waiting for the barricades?' He jumped up in his bed as he spoke, and then fell back again. The doctor ran hastily over, and cried out, 'That's exactly what I said would come of it. There's hæmorrhage again.' And so we were turned out of the room, and the other doctors were speedily summoned, and it was only an hour ago I heard that he was going on favourably; but that in future a strict interdict should be put upon all visits, and none admitted to him but his physicians. Seeing this, there was no use deferring my departure, which would, besides, place my commission in jeopardy. I have already outstayed my leave by two mails.

"Caffarelli is to write to you about the villa, and take all your directions about getting it in order for your arrival. He says

that there is only too much furniture; and as there are something like eighty odd rooms—it is called Palazzotto, a grand word for palace—the chances are that even you will have space enough for what you call 'to turn round in.' I am in no dread of your being disappointed in it, and I repeat once more, it is the most exquisitely beautiful spot I ever saw. I would rather own it than its larger brother, the great kingly palace on the opposite side of the bay.

"I left my card at the Legation for your friend Mr. Damer, but he has not returned my visit. I own I had no peculiar anxiety to know him. Maitland could only say that he 'was not an ill-natured fellow, and perhaps a shade smarter than his colleagues.'

"Caffarelli promises to keep you informed about poor Maitland, of whom, notwithstanding all the doctors say, I do not augur too favourably. On every account, whether you really avail yourselves of it or not, do not refuse his offer of the villa; it would give him the deepest pain and mortification, knowing how I had fixed upon it before I heard of his being the owner. I am very sorry to leave him, and sorrier that I have not heard what he was so eager to tell me. I shall be very impatient till I hear from you, and know whether you concur in my conjecture or not.

"The King sent twice to-day to inquire after M., and has already announced his intention to come in person, so soon as the doctors deem such a visit safe. To see the names that were left to-day with the porter you would say it was one of the first men in Europe was causing all this public anxiety.

"I trust, my dear Alice, you will be satisfied with this long-winded epistle—the last probably you will get from me till I reach Calcutta. I had intended to have given you all the gossip of this pleasant place, which, even on the verge, as some think, of a revolution, has time and to spare for its social delinquencies; but Maitland has so engrossed my thoughts that he has filled my letter; and yet I have not told you one tithe of what I have heard about him from his friend Caffarelli. Indeed, in his estimation, M. has no equal living; he is not alone the cleverest, boldest, and most accomplished of men, but the truest and the best-hearted. I sat late into the night last night listening to traits of his generosity—the poor people he had helped, the deserving creatures he had succoured, and the earnest way he had pressed claims on the Ministry for wretched families who had been friendless without him. I was dying to ask other questions about him, but I did not venture, and yet the man puzzles me

more than ever. Once, indeed, Caffarelli seemed on the verge of telling me something. I had asked what Maitland meant by saying that he should probably soon quit Italy? 'Ah,' replied Caffarelli, laughing, 'then he has told you of that mad scheme of his; but of all things in the world, why go into the service of a Bey of Tunis?' 'A Bey of Tunis!' cried I, in such evident astonishment as showed I had heard of the project for the first time. 'Of course it was but a jest,' said Caraffelli, catching himself up quickly. 'The present Bey and Maitland lived together in Paris in their early days; and I have seen scores of letters entreating Maitland to come to Tunis, and offering him the command of a division, the place of a Minister—anything, in fact, that might be supposed to tempt him. You may imagine yourself how likely it is that a man with all Europe at his feet would consent to finish his life in an African banishment.'

"If I could only have one week more here, I feel certain that Caffarelli would tell me everything that I want to learn, but I must up and away. My servant is already hurrying down my baggage, and I have not more time than to send my loves to you all.

"Yours always,
"MARK LYLE."

"P.S.—Caff. is just the fellow to be made very useful, and likes it, so don't scruple to write to him as fully as you please. He has already told me of a first-rate chief-servant, a Maestro di Casa, for you; and, in fact, only commission him, and he'll improvise you a full household ready for your arrival. *Addio!*"

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MAJOR AT BADEN.

"You will please to write your name there, sir?" said a clerk from behind a wooden railing to a fierce-looking little man in a frogged coat and a gold-banded cap, in the busy bank-room of Parodi at Genoa.

"And my qualities?" asked the other haughtily.

"As you please, sir."

The stranger took the pen, and wrote "Milo M'Caskey, Count of the Two Sicilies, Knight of various orders, and Knight-postulate of St. John of Jerusalem, &c. &c."

"Your Excellency has not added your address," said the clerk, obsequiously.

"The Tuilieries when in Paris, Zarkoe-Zeloe when in Russia. Usually incog. in England, I reside in a cottage near Osborne. When at this side of the Alps, wherever be the royal residence of the Sovereign in the city I chance to be in." He turned to retire, and then, suddenly wheeling round, said, "Forward any letters that may come for me to my relative, who is now at the Trombetta, Turin."

"Your Excellency has forgotten to mention his name."

"So I have," said he, with a careless laugh. "It is somewhat new to me to be in a town where I am unknown. Address my letters to the care of His Highness the Duke of Lauenburg-Gluckstein;" and with a little gesture of his hand to imply that he did not exact any royal honours at his departure, he strutted out of the bank and down the street.

Few met or passed without turning to remark him, such was the contrast between his stature and his gait; for while considerably below the middle size, there was an insolent pretension in his swagger, a defiant impertinence in the stare of his fiery eyes, that seemed to seek a quarrel with each that looked at him. His was indeed that sense of overflowing prosperity, that, if it occasionally inclines the right-minded to a feeling of gratitude and thankfulness, is just as certain to impel the men of a different stamp to feats of aggressiveness and insolence.

Such was indeed his mood, and he would have hailed as the best boon of Fate the occasion for a quarrel and a duel.

The contempt he felt for the busy world that moved by, too deep in its own cares to interpret the defiance he threw around him, so elevated him, that he swaggered along as if the flagway were all his own.

Was he not triumphant? What had not gone well with him? Gold in his pocket, success in a personal combat with a man so highly placed that it was a distinction to him for life to have encountered: the very peremptory order he received to quit Naples at once, was a recognition of his importance that actually overwhelmed him with delight; and he saw in the vista before him, the time when men would stop at the windows of printshops to gaze on the features of "Le fameux M'Caskey."

There was something glorious in his self-conceit, for there was nothing he would not dare to achieve that estimation which he had already conceived of his own abilities. At the time I now speak of, there was a momentary lull in the storm of Italian politics caused by Count Cavour's crafty negotiations with the Neapolitan Government—negotiations solely devised to induce that false sense of security which was to end in downfall and ruin. Whether M'Caskey had any forebodings of what was to come or not, he knew well that it was not the moment for men like himself to be needed. "When the day of action comes, will come the question, 'Where is M'Caskey?' Meanwhile I will be off to Baden. I feel as though I ought to break the bank."

To Baden he went. How many are there who can recall that bustling, pretentious, over-dressed little fellow, who astonished the pistol-gallery by his shooting, and drove the poor *maître d'armes* to the verge of despair by his skill with the rapier, and then swaggered into the play-room to take the first chair he pleased, only too happy if he could provoke any to resent it. How he frowned down the men and ogled the women; smiling blandly at the beauties that passed, as though in recognition of charms their owners might well feel proud of, for they had captivated a M'Caskey! How sumptuous, too, his dinner; how rare and curious his wines; how obsequious were they who waited on him; what peril impended over the man that asked to be served before him!

Strong men—men in all the vigour of their youth and strength—men of honour and men of tried courage, passed and repassed, looked at, but never dreamed of provoking him. Absurd as he was in dress, ridiculous in his overweening pre-

tension, not one ventured on the open sneer at what each in his secret heart despised for its vulgar insolence. And what a testimony to pluck was there in all this! for to what other quality in such a man's nature had the world consented to have paid homage?

Not one of those who made way for him would have stooped to know him. There was not a man of those who controlled his gravity to respect a degree of absurdity actually laughable, who would have accepted his acquaintance at any price; and yet, for all that, he moved amongst them there, exacting every deference that was accorded to the highest, and undeniably inferior to none about him.

What becomes of the cant that classes the courage of men with the instincts of the lowest brutes in presence of a fact like this? or must we not frankly own, that in the respect paid to personal daring we read the avowal that, however constituted men may be, courage is a quality that all must reverence?

Not meeting with the resistance he had half hoped for, denied none of the claims he preferred, M'Caskey became bland and courteous. He vouchsafed a nod to the croupier at the play-table, and manifested, by a graceful gesture as he took his seat, that the company need not rise as he deigned to join them.

In little more than a week after his arrival he had become famous; he was splendid, too, in his largesses to waiters and lackeys; and it is a problem that might be somewhat of a puzzle to resolve, how far the sentiments of the very lowest class can permeate the rank above them, and make themselves felt in the very highest; for this very estimation, thus originating, grew at last to be at least partially entertained by others of a very superior station. It was then that men discussed with each other who was this strange count—of what nation? Five modern languages had he been heard to talk in, without a flaw even of accent. What country he served? Whence and what his resources? It was when newspaper correspondents began vaguely to hint at an interesting stranger, whose skill in every weapon was only equalled by his success at play, &c., that he disappeared as suddenly as he had come, but not without leaving ample matter for wonder in the telegraphic despatch he sent off a few hours before starting, and which, in some form more or less garbled, was currently talked of in society. It was addressed to M. Mocquard, Tuileries, Paris, and in these words: "Tell E. I shall meet him at the Compèigne on Saturday."

Could anything be more delightfully intimate? While the

crafty idlers of Baden were puzzling their heads as to who he might be who could thus write to an imperial secretary, the writer was travelling at all speed through Switzerland, but so totally disguised in appearance that not even the eye of a detective could have discovered in the dark-haired, black-bearded, and sedate-looking Colonel Chamberlayne the fiery-faced and irascible Count M'Caskey.

A very brief telegram in a cipher well known to him was the cause of his sudden departure. It ran thus: "Wanted at Chambery in all haste." And at Chambery, at the Golden Lamb, did he arrive with a speed which few save himself knew how to compass. Scarcely had he entered the arched doorway of the inn, than a traveller, preceded by his luggage, met him. They bowed, as people do who encounter in a passage, but without acquaintance; and yet in that brief courtesy the stranger had time to slip a letter into M'Caskey's hand, who passed in with all the ease and unconcern imaginable. Having ordered dinner, he went to his room to dress, and then, locking his door, he read:—

"The Cabinet courier of the English Government will pass Chambery on the night of Saturday the 18th, or on the morning of Sunday the 19th. He will be the bearer of three despatch-bags, two large and one small one, bearing the letters F. O. and the number 18 on it. You are to possess yourself of this, if possible—the larger bags are not required. If you succeed, make for Naples by whatever route you deem best and speediest, bearing in mind that the loss may possibly be known at Turin within a brief space.

"If the contents be as suspected, and all goes well, you are a made man.

"C. C."

M'Caskey read this over three several times, dwelling each time on the same places, and then he arose and walked leisurely up and down the room. He then took out his guide-book and saw that a train started for St. Jean de Maurienne at six, arriving at eight—a short train, not in correspondence with any other; and as the railroad ended there, the remainder of the journey, including the passage of Mont Cenis, must be performed by carriage. Of course, it was in this short interval the feat must be accomplished, if at all.

The waiter announced "his Excellency's" dinner while he thus cogitated, and he descended and dined heartily; he even

ordered a bottle of very rare chambertin, which stood at eighteen francs in the *carte*. He sipped his wine at his ease; he had full an hour before the train started, and he had time for reflection as well as enjoyment.

"You are to possess yourself of this," muttered he, reading from a turned-down part of the note—"Had you been writing to any other man in Europe, Signor Conte Caffarelli, you would have been profuse enough of your directions; you would have said, 'You are to shoot this fellow—you are to waylay him—you are to have him attacked and come to his rescue,' and a score more of suchlike contrivances; but—to me—to ME—there was none of this. It was just as Buonaparte said to Desaix at Marengo—'Ride through the centre'—he never added how. A made man! I should think so! The man has been made some years since, sir. Another bottle, waiter, and mind that it be not shaken. Who was it—I can't remember—stopped a Russian courier with despatches for Constantinople? Ay, to be sure, it was Long Wellesley; he told me the story himself. It was a clumsy trick, too; he upset his sledge in the snow, and made off with the bags, and got great credit for the feat at home."

"The train will start in a quarter of an hour, sir," said the waiter.

"Not if I am not ready, my good fellow," said the Major—"though now I see nothing to detain me, and I will go."

Alone in his first-class, he had leisure to think over his plans. Much depended on who might be the courier. He knew most of them well, and speculated on the peculiar traits of this or that. "If it be Bromley, he will have his own calèche; Airlie will be for the cheap thing, and take the diligence; and Poynder will be on the look-out for someone to join him, and pay half the post-horses and all the postilions. There are half a dozen more of these fellows on this 'dodge,' but I defy the craftiest of them to know me now;" and he took out a little pocket-glass, and gazed complacently at his features. "Colonel Moore Chamberlayne, A.D.C., on his way to Corfu, with despatches for the Lord High Commissioner. A very soldier-like fellow too," added he, arranging his whiskers, "but, I shrewdly suspect, a bit of a Tartar. Yes, that's the ticket," added he, with a smile at his image in the glass—"despatches of great importance for Storks at Corfu."

Arrived at St. Jean, he learned that the mail train from France did not arrive until 11.20, ample time for all his arrangements. He also learned that the last English messenger

had left his calèche at Susa, and, except one light carriage with room for only two, there was nothing on that side of the mountain but the diligence. This conveyance he at once secured, ordering the postilion to be in the saddle and ready to start, if necessary, when the mail train came in. "It is just possible," said he, "that the friend I am expecting may not arrive, in which case I shall await the next train; but if he comes you must drive your best, my man, for I shall want to catch the first train for Susa in the morning." Saying this, he retired to his room, where he had many things to do,—so many, indeed, that he had but just completed them when the shriek of the engine announced that the train was coming—the minute after the long line dashed into the station and came to a stand.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE MESSENGER'S FIRST JOURNEY.

As the train glided smoothly into the station, M'Caskey passed down the platform, peering into each carriage as if in search of an unexpected friend. "Not come," muttered he, in a voice of displeasure, loud enough to be heard by the solitary first-class passenger, who soon after emerged with some enormous bags of white linen massively sealed, and bearing addresses in parchment.

"I beg pardon," said M'Caskey, approaching and touching his hat in salute. "Are you with despatches?"

"Yes," said the other, in some astonishment at the question.

"Have you a bag for *me?*" and then suddenly correcting himself with a little smile at the error of his supposing he must be universally known, added, "I mean for the Hon. Colonel Chamberlayne."

"I have nothing that is not addressed to a legation," said the other, trying to pass on.

"Strange! they said I should receive some further instructions by the first messenger. Sorry to have detained you—good evening."

The young man—for he was young—was already too deep in an attempt to inquire in French after a carriage, to hear the last words, and continued to ask various inattentive bystanders certain questions about a calèche that ought to have been left by somebody in somebody's care for the use of somebody else.

"Is it true, can you tell me?" said he, running after M'Caskey. "They say that there is no conveyance here over the mountain except the diligence."

"I believe it is quite true," said the "Colonel," gravely.

"And they say, too, that the diligence never, at this season, arrives in time to catch the early train at—I forget the place."

"At Susa?"

"Yes, that's it."

"They are perfectly correct in all that; and knowing it so

well, and as my despatches are urgent, I sent on my own light carriage here from Geneva."

"And have you despatches too?" asked the other, whom we may as well announce to the reader as Tony Butler. "Have you despatches, too?" cried he, in great delight at meeting something like a colleague.

"Yes; I take out orders for the Lord High Commisioner to Corfu. I am the head of the Staff there."

Tony bowed in recognition of the announced rank, and said quietly, "My name is Butler. I am rather new to this sort of thing, and never crossed the Alps in my life."

"I'll give you a lift, then, for I have a spare place. My servant has gone round with my heavy baggage by Trieste, and I have a seat to spare."

"This is most kind of you, but I scarcely dare put you to such inconvenience."

"Don't talk of that. We are all in the same boat. It's my luck to have this offer to-day—it will be yours to-morrow. What's your destination?"

"First Turin, then Naples; but I believe I shall have no delay at Turin, and the Naples bags are the most urgent ones."

"Is there anything going on down there, then?" asked M'Caskey, carelessly.

"I suspect there must be, for three of our fellows have been sent there—I am the fourth within a fortnight."

"A country that never interested me. Take a cigar. Are you ready, or do you want to eat something?"

"No, I am quite ready, and only anxious not to be late for this first train. The fact is, it's all a new sort of life to me, and as I am a wretchedly bad Frenchman, I don't get on too well."

"The great secret is, be peremptory, never listen to excuses, tolerate no explanations. That's my plan. I pay liberally, but I insist on having what I want."

They were now seated, and dashing along at all the speed and with all the noise of four wiry posters, and M'Caskey went on to describe how, with that system of united despotism and munificence, he had travelled over the whole globe with success. As for the anecdotes he told, they embraced every land and sea; and there was scarcely an event of momentous importance of the last quarter of a century of which he had not some curious private details. He was the first man to discover the plans of Russia on the Pruth. It was he found out Louis Philippe's intrigue about the Spanish marriages. "If you feel interest in this sort

of thing," said he, carelessly, "just tell the fellows at home to show you the blue-book with Chamberlayne's correspondence. It is private and confidential; but, as a friend of mine, you can see it." And what generosity of character he had! he had let Seymour carry off all the credit of that detection of Russia. "To be sure," added he, "one can't forget old times, and Seymour was my fag at Eton." It was he, too, counselled Lord Elgin to send off the troops from China to Calcutta to assist in repressing the mutiny. "Elgin hesitated; he couldn't make up his mind; he thought this at one moment and that the next; and he sent for me at last and said, 'George, I want a bit of advice from you.' 'I know what you mean,' said I, stopping him; 'send every man of them—don't hold back a drummer.' I will say," he added, "he had the honesty to own from whom he got that counsel, and he was greatly provoked when he found I could not be included in the vote of thanks of the House. 'Confound their etiquette,' said he; 'it is due to George, and he ought to have it.' You don't know why I'm in such haste to Corfu now?"

"I have not the faintest notion."

"I will tell you; first, because a man can always trust a gentleman; secondly, it will be matter of table-talk by the time you get back. The Tories are in need of the Radicals, and to buy their support intend to offer the throne of Greece, which will be vacant whenever we like, to Richard Cobden."

"How strange! and would he accept it?"

"Some say no; *I* say yes; and Louis Napoleon, who knows men thoroughly, agrees with me. '*Mon cher Cham*'—he always called me Cham—'talk as people will, it is a very pleasant thing to sit on a throne, and it goes far towards one's enjoyment of life to have so many people employed all day long to make it agreeable.'" If Tony thought at times that his friend was a little vainglorious, he ascribed it to the fact that any man so intimate with the great people of the world, talking of them as his ordinary everyday acquaintances, might reasonably appear such to one as much removed from all such intercourse as he himself was. That the man who could say, "Nesselrode, don't tell me," or "Rechberg, my good fellow, you are in error there!" should be now sitting beside him, sharing his sandwich with him, and giving him to drink from his sherry-flask; was not that glory enough to turn a stronger head than poor Tony's? Ah, my good reader, I know well that *you* would not have been caught by such blandishments. You have "seen men and cities." You have been at courts, dined beside

royalties, and been smiled on by serene highnesses; but Tony has not had your training; he has had none of these experiences; he has heard of great names just as he has heard of great victories. The illustrious people of the earth are no more within the reach of his estimation than are the jewels of a Mogul's turban; but it is all the more fascinating to him to sit beside one who "knows it all."

Little wonder, then, if time sped rapidly, and that he never knew weariness. Let him start what theme he might, speak of what land, what event, what person he pleased, the Colonel was ready for him. It was marvellous indeed—so very marvellous, that to a suspicious mind it might have occasioned distrust—with how many great men he had been at school, what shoals of distinguished fellows he had served with. With a subtle flattery, too, he let drop the remark, that he was not usually given to be so frank and communicative. "The fact is," said he, "young men are, for the most part, bad listeners to the experiences of men of my age; they fancy that they know life as well, if not better, than ourselves, and that our views are those of 'bygones.' *You*, however, showed none of this spirit; you were willing to hear and to learn from one of whom it would be false modesty were I not to say, Few know more of men and their doings."

Now Tony liked this appreciation of him, and he said to himself, "He *is* a clever fellow—not a doubt of it: he never saw me till this evening, and yet he knows me thoroughly well." Seeing how the Colonel had met with everybody, he resolved he would get from him his opinion of some of his own friends, and, to lead the way, asked if he was acquainted with the members of the English Legation at Turin.

"I know Bathurst; we *were* intimate," said he; "but we once were in love with the same woman—the mother of an empress she is now—and as I rather 'cut him out' a coldness ensued, and somehow we never resumed our old footing. As for Croker, the Secretary, it was I got him that place."

"And Damer—Skeff Damer—do you know him?"

"I should think I do. I was his godfather."

"He's the greatest friend I have in the world!" cried Tony, in ecstasy at this happy accident.

"I made him drop Chamberlayne. It was his second name, and I was vain enough to be annoyed that it was not his first. Is he here now?"

"Yes, he is attached to the Legation, and sometimes here, sometimes at Naples."

"Then we'll make him give us a dinner to-day, for I shall refuse Bathurst: he is sure to ask me; but you will tell Damer that we are both engaged to *him*."

Tony only needed to learn the tie that bound his newly-made acquaintance with his dearest friend, to launch freely out about himself and his new fortunes; he told all about the hard usage his father had met with—the services he had rendered his country in India and elsewhere, and the ungenerous requital he had met for them all. "That is why you see me here a messenger, instead of being a soldier, like all my family for seven generations back. I won't say I like it—that wouldn't be true; but I do it because it happens to be one of the few things I *can* do."

"That's a mistake, sir," said the Colonel, fiercely; "a mistake thousands fall into every day. A man can make of life whatever he likes, if only—mark me well—if only his will be strong enough."

"If wishing would do it——"

"Hold! I'm not talking of wishing; schoolboys wish, pale-cheeked freshmen at college, goggle-eyed ensigns in marching regiments, wish. Men, real men, do not wish; they will—that's all the difference. Strong men make a promise to themselves early in life, and they feel it a point of honour to keep it. As Rose said one day in the club at Calcutta, speaking of me, 'He has got the Bath, just because he said he would get it.'"

"The theory is a very pleasant one."

"You can make the practice just as pleasant, if you like it. Whenever you take your next leave—they give you leave, don't they?"

"Yes, three months; we might have more, I believe, if we asked for it."

"Well, come and spend your next leave with me at Corfu. You shall have some good shooting over in Albania, plenty of mess society, pleasant yachting, and you'll like our old Lord High—he's stiff and cold at first, but, introduced by *me*, you'll be at once amongst the 'most favoured nations.'"

"I can't thank you enough for so kind a proposal," began Tony; but the other stopped him with, "Don't thank me, but help me to take care of this bag. It contains the whole fate of the Levant in its inside. Those sacks of yours—I suppose you know what they have for contents?"

"No; I have no idea what's in them."

"Old blue-books and newspapers, nothing else; they're all make-believes—a farce to keep up the notion that great activity prevails at the Foreign Office, and to fill up that paragraph in

the newspapers, 'Despatches were yesterday sent off to the Lord High Commissioner of the Bahamas,' or 'Her Majesty's Minister at Otaheite.' Here we are at the rail now—that's Susa. Be alive, for I see the smoke, and the steam must be up."

They were just in time; the train was actually in motion when they got in, and, as the Colonel, who kept up a rapid conversation with the station-master, informed Tony, nothing would have induced them to delay but having seen himself. "They knew me," said he; "they remembered my coming down here last autumn with the Prince de Carignan and Cavour." And once more had Tony to thank his stars for having fallen into such companionship.

As they glided along towards Turin, the Colonel told Tony that if he found the *Weazle* gunboat at Genoa, as he expected, waiting for him, he would set him, Tony, and his despatches, down safely at Naples, as he passed on to Malta. "If it's the *Growler*," said he, "I'll not promise you, because Hurton the commander is not in good-humour with me. I refused to recommend him the other day to the First Lord for promotion—say nothing about this to the fellows at the Legation; indeed, don't mention anything about me, except to Damer—for the dinner, you know."

"I suppose I ought to go straight to the Legation at once?" said Tony, as they entered Turin; "my orders are to deliver the bags before anything else."

"Certainly; let us drive there straight—there's nothing like doing things regularly; I'm a martinet about all duty;" and so they drove to the Legation, where Tony, throwing one large sack to the porter, shouldered the other himself, and passed in.

"Holloa!" cried the Colonel; "I'll give you ten minutes, and if you're not down by that time, I'll go off and order breakfast at the inn."

"All right," said Tony; "this fellow says that Damer is at Naples."

"I knew that," muttered the Colonel to himself; and then added aloud, "Be alive and come down as quick as you can"—he looked at his watch as he spoke; it wanted five minutes to eight—"at five minutes past eight the train should start for Genoa."

He seized the small despatch-bag in his hand, and telling the cabman to drive to the Hotel Feder and wait for him there, he made straight for the railroad. He was just in the nick; and while Tony was impatiently pacing an anti-room of the Legation, the other was already some miles on the way to Genoa.

At last, a very sleepy-looking attaché, in a dressing-gown and slippers, made his appearance. "Nothing but these?" said he, yawning and pointing to the great sacks.

"No; nothing else for Turin."

"Then why the —— did you knock me up—when it's only a shower-bath and Greydon's boot-trees?"

"How the —— did I know what was in them?" said Tony, as angrily.

"You must be precious green, then. When were you made?"

"When was I made?"

"Yes; when were you named a messenger?"

"Some time in spring."

"I thought you must be an infant, or you'd know that it's only the small bags are of any consequence."

"Have you anything more to say? I want to get a bath and my breakfast."

"I've a lot more to say, and I shall have to tell Sir Joseph you're here! and I shall have to sign your time bill, and to see if we haven't got something for Naples. You're for Naples, ain't you? And I want to send Damer some cigars and a pot of caviare that's been here these two months, and that he must have smelled from Naples."

"Then be hasty, for heaven's sake, for I'm starving."

"You're starving! how strange, and it's only eight o'clock! Why, we don't breakfast here till one, and I rarely eat anything."

"So much the worse for you," said Tony gruffly. "My appetite is excellent, if I only had a chance to gratify it."

"What's the news in town—is there anything stirring."

"Not that *I* know."

"Has Lumley engaged Teresina again?"

"Never heard of her."

"He ought; tell him *I* said so. She's fifty times better than La Gradina. Our *chef* here," added he in a whisper," says she has better legs than Pochini."

"I am charmed to hear it. Would you just tell him that mine are getting very tired here?"

"Will Lawson pay that handicap to George Hobart?"

Tony shook his head to imply total ignorance of all concerned.

"He needn't, you know; at least Saville Harris refused to book up to Whitemare on exactly the same grounds. It was just this way: here was the winning-post—no, here; that seal there was the grand stand; when the mare came up she was second. I don't think you care for racing, eh?"

"A steeple-chase; yes, particularly when I'm a rider. But

what I care most for just now is a plunge into cold water and a good breakfast."

There was something actually touching in the commisserating look the attaché gave Tony as he turned away and left the room. What was the public service to come to if these were the fellows to be named as messengers?

In a very few minutes he was back again in the room. "Where's Naples?" asked he, curtly.

"Where's Naples? Where it always was, I suppose," said Tony, doggedly—"In the Gulf of that name."

"I mean the bag—the Naples bag; it is under flying seal, and Sir Joseph wants to see the despatches."

"Oh, that is below in the cab. I'll go down and fetch it," and without waiting for more, he hastened downstairs. The cab was gone. "Naturally enough," thought Tony, "he got tired waiting; he's off to order breakfast."

He hurried upstairs again to report that a friend with whom he travelled had just driven away to the hotel with all the baggage.

"And the bags?" cried the other, in a sort of horror.

"Yes, the bags, of course; but I'll go after him. What's the chief hotel called?"

"The Trombetta."

"I don't think that was the name."

"The Czar de Russie?"

"No, nor that."

"Perhaps Feder?"

"Yes, that's it. Just send some one to show me the way, and I'll be back immediately. I suspect my unlucky breakfast must be prorogued to luncheon time."

"Not a bit of it!" cried a fine, fresh-looking handsome man, who entered the room with a riding-whip in his hand; "come in and take share of mine."

"He has to go over to Feder's for the bags, Sir Joseph," whispered the attaché, submissively.

"Send the porter—send Jasper—send any one you like. Come along," said he, drawing his arm within Tony's. "You've not been in Italy before, and your first impression ought to be favourable; so I'll introduce you to a Mont Cenis trout."

"And I'll profit by the acquaintance," said Tony. "I have the appetite of a wolf."

CHAPTER XLV.

A SHOCK FOR TONY.

If Tony Butler took no note of time as he sat at breakfast with Sir Joseph, he was only sharing the fortune of every man who ever found himself in that companionship. From one end of Europe to the other his equal could not be found. It was not alone that he had stores of conversation for the highest capacities and the most cultivated minds, but he possessed that thorough knowledge of life so interesting to men of the world, and with it that insight into character which is so often the key to the mystery of statecraft; and with all these he had a geniality and a winning grace of look, voice, and demeanour that sent one from his presence with the thought that, if the world could but compass a few more like him, one would not change the planet for the brightest in the firmament. Breakfast over, they smoked; then they had a game at billiards; after that they strolled into the garden, and had some pistol-firing. Here Tony acquitted himself creditably, and rose in his host's esteem; for the minister liked a man who could do anything—no matter what—very well. Tony, too, gained on him. His own fine joyous nature understood at once the high-hearted spirit of a young fellow who had no affectations about him, thoroughly at his ease without presumption; and yet, through that gentleman element so strong in him, never transgressing the limits of a freedom so handsomely accorded him.

While the hours rolled over thus delightfully, a messenger returned to say that he had been at each of the great hotels, but could find no trace of Colonel Chamberlayne, nor of the missing bags.

"Send Moorcap," said the minister.

Moorcap was away two hours, and came back with the same story.

"I suspect how it is," said Tony. "Chamberlayne has been obliged to start suddenly, and has carried off my bags with his own; but when he discovers his mistake, he'll drop them at Naples."

Sir Joseph smiled—perhaps he did not think the explanation very satisfactory; and perhaps—who knows?—but he thought that the loss of a despatch-bag was not amongst the heaviest of human calamities. "At all events," he said, "we'll give you an early dinner, Butler, and you can start by the late train to Genoa, and catch the morning steamer to Naples."

Tony asked no better; and I am afraid to have to confess that he engaged at a game of "pool" with all the zest of one who carried no weighty care on his breast.

When the time for leave-taking came, Sir Joseph shook his hand with cordial warmth, telling him to be sure to dine with him as he came through Turin. "Hang up your hat here, Butler; and if I should be from home, tell them that you are come to dinner."

Very simple words these. They cost little to him who spoke them, but what a joy and happiness to poor Tony! Oh, ye gentlemen of high place and station, if you but knew how your slightest words of kindness—your two or three syllables of encouragement—give warmth and glow and vigour to many a poor wayfarer on life's highroad, imparting a sense not alone of hope, but of self-esteem, to a nature too distrustful of itself, mayhap you might be less chary of that which, costing you so little, is wealth unspeakable to him it is bestowed upon. Tony went on his way rejoicing; he left that threshhold, as many others had left it, thinking far better of the world and its people, and without knowing it, very proud of the notice of one whose favour he felt to be fame. "Ah," thought he, "if Alice had but heard how that great man spoke to me—if Alice only saw how familiarly he treated me—it might show her, perhaps, that others at least can see in me some qualities not altogether hopeless."

If, now and then, some thought of that "unlucky bag"—so he called it to himself—would invade, he dismissed it speedily, with the assurance that it had already safely reached its destination, and that the Colonel and Skeffy had doubtless indulged in many a hearty laugh over his embarrassment at its loss. "If they knew but all," muttered he; "I take it very coolly. I'm not breaking my heart over the disaster." And so far he was right—not, however, from the philosophical indifference that he imagined, but simply because he never believed in the calamity, nor had realized it to himself.

When he landed at Naples, he drove off at once to the lodgings of his friend Damer, which, though at a considerable height from the ground, in a house of the St. Lucia Quarter,

he found were dignified with the title of British Legation; a written notice on the door informed all the readers that "H. B. M.'s Chargé d'Affaires transacted business from twelve to four every day." It was two o'clock when Tony arrived, and, notwithstanding the aforesaid announcement, he had to ring three times before the door was opened. At length a sleepy-looking valet appeared to say that "His Excellency"—he styled him so—was in his bath, and could not be seen in less than an hour. Tony sent in his name, and speedily received for answer that he would find a letter addressed to him in the rack over the chimney, and Mr. Damer would be dressed and with him by the time he had read it.

Poor Tony's eyes swam with tears as he saw his mother's handwriting, and he tore open the sheet with hot impatience. It was very short, as were all her letters, and so we give it entire:—

"My own Darling Tony,

"Your beautiful present reached me yesterday, and what shall I say to my poor reckless boy for such an act of extravagance? Surely, Tony, it was made for a queen, and not for a poor widow that sits the day long mending her stockings at the window. But ain't I proud of it, and of him that sent it! Heaven knows what it has cost you, my dear boy, for even the carriage here from London, by the Royal Parcel Company, Limited, came to thirty-two and fourpence. Why they call themselves 'Limited' after that, is clean beyond my comprehension." If Tony smiled here, it was with a hot and flushed cheek, for he had forgotten to prepay the whole carriage, and he was vexed at his thoughtlessness.

"As to my wearing it going to meeting, as you say, it's quite impossible. The thought of its getting wet would be a snare to take my mind off the blessed words of the minister; and I'm not sure, my dear Tony, that any congregation could sit profitably within sight of what—not knowing the love that sent it—would seem like a temptation and a vanity before men. Sables, indeed, real Russian sables, appear a strange covering for these old shoulders.

"It was about two hours after it came that Mrs. Trafford called in to see me, and Jeanie would have it that I'd go into the room with my grand new cloak on me; and sure enough I did, Tony, trying all the while not to seem as if it was anything strange or uncommon, but just the sort of wrapper I'd throw round me of a cold morning. But it wouldn't do, my

dear Tony. I was half afraid to sit down on it, and I kept turning out the purple-satin lining so often that Mrs Trafford said at last, 'Will you forgive my admiration of your cloak, Mrs. Butler, but I never saw one so beautiful before;' and then I told her who it was that sent it; and she got very red and then very pale, and then walked to the window, and said something about a shower that was threatening; though, sooth to say, Tony, the only threat of rain I could see was in her own blue eyes. But she turned about gaily and said, 'we are going away, Mrs. Butler—going abroad;" and before I could ask why or where, she told me in a hurried sort of way that her sister Isabella had been ordered to pass a winter in some warm climate, and that they were going to try Italy. She said it all in a strange quick voice, as if she didn't like to talk of it, and wanted it over; but she grew quite herself again when she said that the gardener would take care that my flowers came regularly, and that Sir Arthur and Lady Lyle would be more than gratified if I would send up for anything I liked out of the garden. 'Don't forget that the melons were all of Tony's sowing, Mrs. Butler,' said she, smiling; and I could have kissed her for the way she said it.

"There were many other kind things she said, and in a way, too, that made them more than kind; so that when she went away, I sat thinking if it was not a temptation to meet a nature like hers—so sweet, so lovely, and yet so worldly; for in all she spoke, Tony, there was never a word dropped of what sinful creatures we are, and what a thorny path it is that leads us to the better life before us.

"I was full of her visit, and everything she said, when Dr. Stewart dropped in to say that they had been down again at the Burnside to try and get him to let Dolly go abroad with them. 'I never liked the notion, Mrs. Butler,' he said 'but I was swayed here and swayed there by my thoughts for the lass, what was best for her body's health, and that other health that is of far more value; when there came a letter to me—it was anonymous,—saying, "Before you suffer your good and virtuous daughter to go away to a foreign land, just ask the lady that is to protect her if she still keeps up the habit of moonlight walks in a garden with a gentleman for her companion, and if that be the sort of teaching she means to inculcate." Mrs. Trafford came to the door as I was reading the letter, and I said, "What can you make of such a letter as this?" and as she read it her cheek grew purple and she said, "There is an end of our proposal, Dr. Stewart. Tell your daughter I shall

importune her no more; but this letter I mean to keep; it is in a hand I know well." And she went back to the carriage without another word; and to-morrow they leave the Abbey, some say not to come back again.

"I cried the night through after the doctor went away, for what a world it is of sin and misery; not that I will believe wrong of her, sweet and beautiful as she is, but what for was she angry? and why did she show that this letter could give her such pain? And now, my dear Tony, since it could be no other than yourself she walked alone with, is it not your duty to write to the doctor and tell him so? The pure heart fears not the light, neither are the good of conscience afraid. That she is above your hope is no reason that she is above your love. That I was your father's wife may show that! Above all, Tony, think that a Gospel minister should not harbour an evil thought of one who does not deserve it, and whose mightiest sin is perchance the pride that scorns a self-defence.

"The poor doctor is greatly afflicted: he is sorry now that he showed the letter, and Dolly cries over it night and day.

"Is it not a strange thing that Captain Graham's daughters, that never were used to come here, are calling at the Burnside two or three times a-week?

"Write to me, my dear Tony, and if you think well of what I said, write to the doctor also, and believe me your ever loving mother,

"ELEANOR BUTLER.

"Dolly Stewart has recovered her health again, but not her spirits. She rarely comes to see me, but I half suspect that her reason is her dislike to show me the depression that is weighing over her. So is it, dear Tony, go where you will; there is no heart without its weary load, no spirit without that touch of sorrow that should teach submission. Reflect well over this, dear boy; and never forget that though at times we put off our troubles as a wayfarer lays down his pack, we must just strap on the load again when we take to the road, for it is a burden we have to bear to the journey's end."

Not all the moral reflections of this note saved it from being crushed passionately in his hand as he finished reading it. That walk, that moonlight walk, with whom could it have been? with whom but Maitland? And it was by her—by her that his whole heart was filled—her image, her voice, her gait, her

smile, her faintest whisper, that made up the world in which he lived. Who could love her as *he* did? Others would have their hopes and ambitions, their dreams of worldly success, and such like; but he—he asked none of these; *her* heart was all he strove for. With her he would meet any fortune. He knew she was above him in every way—as much by every gift and grace as by every accident of station; but what did that signify? The ardour of his love glowed only the stronger for the difficulty—just as his courage would have mounted the higher, the more hazardous the feat that dared it. These were his reasonings—or rather some shadowy shapes of these flitted through his mind.

And was it now all over? Was the star that had guided him so long to be eclipsed from him? Was he never again to ask himself in a moment of difficulty or doubt, What will Alice say?—what will Alice think? As for the scandalous tongues that dared to asperse her, he scorned them; and he was indignant with the old minister for not making that very letter itself the reason of accepting a proposal he had been until then averse to. He should have said, "*Now* there can be no hesitation—Dolly must go with you *now*." It was just as his musings got thus far that Skeffy rushed into the room and seized him by both hands.

"Ain't I glad to see your great sulky face again? Sit down and tell me everything—how you came—when—how long you're to stay—and what brought you here."

"I came with despatches—that is, I ought to have had them."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that some of the bags I left at Turin; and one small fellow, which I take to have been the cream of the correspondence, Chamberlayne carried on here—at least I hope so. Haven't you got it?"

"What infernal muddle are your brains in? Who is Chamberlayne?"

"Come, come, Skeffy, I'm not in a joking mood;" and he glanced at the letter in his hand as he spoke. "Don't worry me, old fellow, but say that you have got the bag all right."

"But I have not. I never saw it—never heard of it."

"And has the colonel not been here?"

"Who is the colonel?"

"Chamberlayne."

"And who is Chamberlayne?"

"That *is* cool, certainly; I think a man might acknowledge his godfather?"

"Whose godfather is he?"

"Yours—your own. Perhaps you'll deny that you were christened after him, and called Chamberlayne?"

Skeffy threw up his embroidered cap in the air at these words, and, flinging himself on a sofa, actually screamed with laughter. "Tony," cried he at last, "this will immortalize you. Of all the exploits performed by messengers, this one takes the van."

"Look here, Damer," said Tony, sternly; "I have told you already I'm in no laughing humour; I've had enough here to take the jollity out of me"—and he shook the letter in his hand —"for many a day to come; so that whatever you have to say to me, bear in mind that you say it to one little disposed to good-humour. Is it true that you have not received these despatches?"

"Perfectly true."

"Then how are we to trace him? His name is Colonel Moore Chamberlayne, aide-de-camp to the Lord High Commissioner, Corfu."

Skeffy bit his lip, and by a great effort succeeded in repressing the rising temptation to another scream of laughter, and, taking down a bulky red-covered volume from a shelf, began to turn over its pages. "There," said he at last—"there is the whole staff at Corfu; Hailes, Winchester, Corbett, and Ainslie. No Chamberlayne amongst them."

Tony stared at the page in hopeless bewilderment. "What do you know of him? Who introduced you to each other? Where did you meet?" asked Skeffy.

"We met at the foot of the Mont Cenis, where, seeing that I had despatches, and no means to get forward, he offered me a seat in his calèche. I accepted gladly, and we got on capitally; he was immense fun; he knew everybody, and had been everywhere; and when he told me that he was your godfather——"

"Stop, stop! for the love of heaven will you stop, or you'll kill me!" cried Skeffy, and, throwing himself on his back on the sofa, he flung his legs into the air, and yelled aloud with laughter.

"Do you know, Master Damer, I'm sorely tempted to pitch you neck and crop out of the window?" said Tony, savagely.

"Do so, do so, by all means, if you like; only let me have my laugh out, or I shall burst a blood-vessel."

Tony made no reply, but walked up and down the room with his brow bent and his arms folded.

"And then?" cried Skeff—"and then? What came next?"

"It is your opinion, then," said Tony, sternly, "that this fellow was a swindler, and not on the Staff at all?"

"No more than he was my godfather!" cried Damer, wiping his eyes.

"And that the whole was a planned scheme to get hold of the despatches?"

"Of course. Filangieri knows well that we are waiting for important instructions here. There is not a man calls here who is not duly reported to him by his secret police."

"And why didn't Sir Joseph think of that when I told him what had happened? All he said was, 'Be of good cheer, Butler; the world will go round even after the loss of a despatch-bag.'"

"So like him," said Skeffy; "the levity of that man is the ruin of him. They all say so at the Office."

"I don't know what they say at the Office; but I can declare that so perfect a gentleman and so fine a fellow I never met before."

Skeffy turned to the glass over the chimney, smoothed his mustaches, and pointed their tips most artistically, smiling gracefully at himself, and seeming to say, "You and I, if we were not too modest, could tell of some one fully his equal."

"And what's to be done—what's to come of this?" asked Tony, after a short silence.

"I'll have to report you, Master Tony. I'll have to write home—'My Lord,—The messenger Butler arrived here this morning to say that he confided your lordship's despatches and private instructions to a most agreeable gentleman, whose acquaintance he made at St. Jean de Maurienne; and that the fascinating stranger, having apparently not mastered their contents up to the present——'"

"Go to the——"

"No, Tony, I shall not; but I think it not at all improbable that such will be the destination his lordship will assign assistant-messenger Butler. The fact is, my boy, your career in our department is ended."

"With all my heart! Except for that fine fellow I saw at Turin, I think I never met such a set of narrow-minded snobs."

"Tony, Tony," said the other, "when Moses, in the 'Vicar of Wakefield'—and I take it he is more familiar to you than the other of that name—was 'done' by the speculator in green spectacles, he never inveighed against those who had unfortunately confided their interests to his charge. Now, as to our department——"

"Confound the department! I wish I had never heard of it. You say it's all up with me, and of course I suppose it is; and, to tell you the truth, Skeffy, I don't think it signifies a great deal just now, except for that poor mother of mine." Here he turned away and wiped his eyes hurriedly. "I take it that all mothers make the same sort of blunder, and never will believe that they can have a blockhead for a son till the world has set its seal on him."

"Take a weed, and listen to me," said Skeffy, dictatorially, and he threw his cigar-case across the table as he spoke. "You have contrived to make as bad a *début* in your career as is well possible to conceive."

"What's the use of telling me that? In your confounded passion for hearing yourself talk, you forget that it is not so pleasant for me to listen."

"Prisoner at the bar," continued Skeffy, "you have been convicted—you stand, indeed, self-convicted—of an act which, as we regard it, is one of gross ignorance, of incredible folly, or of inconceivable stupidity—places you in a position to excite the pity of compassionate men, the scorn of those severer moralists who accept not the extenuating circumstances of youth, unacquaintance with life, and a credulity that approaches child-like——"

"You're a confounded fool, Skeffy, to go on in this fashion when a fellow is in such a fix as I am, not to speak of other things that are harder to bear. It's a mere toss-up whether he laughs at your nonsense or pitches you over the banisters. I've been within an ace of one and the other three times in the last five minutes; and now all my leaning is towards the last of the two."

"Don't yield to it then, Tony. Don't, I warn you."

"And why?"

"Because you'd never forgive yourself, not alone for having injured a true and faithful friend, but for the far higher and more irreparable loss in having cut short the career of a man destined to be a light to Europe. I say it in no vanity—no boastfulness. No, on my honour! if I could—if the choice were fairly given to me, I'd rather not be a man of mark and eminence. I'd rather be a commonplace, tenth-rate sort of dog like yourself."

The unaffected honesty with which he said this did for Tony what no cajolery nor flattery could have accomplished, and set him off into a roar of laughter that conquered all his spleen and ill-humour.

"Your laugh, like the laugh of the foolish, is ill-timed. You cannot see that you were introduced, not to be stigmatized, but to point a moral. You fancy yourself a creature—you are a category; you imagine you are an individuality—you are not; you are a fragment rent from a primeval rock."

"I believe I ought to be as insensible as a stone to stand you. But stop all this, I say, and listen to me. I'm not much up to writing—but you'll help me, I know; and what I want said is simply this:—'I have been tricked out of one of the bags by a rascal that if ever I lay hands on I'll bring bodily before the Office at home, and make him confess the whole scheme; and I'll either break his neck afterwards, or leave him to the law, as the Secretary of State may desire.'"

Now poor Tony delivered this with a tone and manner that implied he thought he was dictating a very telling and able despatch. "I suppose," added he, "I am to say that I now resign my post, and I wish the devil had me when I accepted it."

"Not civil, certainly, to the man who gave you the appointment, Tony. Besides, when a man resigns, he has to wait for the acceptance of his resignation."

"Oh, as for that, there need be no ceremony. They'll be even better pleased to get rid of me than I to go. They got a bad bargain; and, to do them justice, they seemed to have guessed as much from the first."

"And then, Tony?"

"I'll go to sea—I'll go before the mast; there must be many a vessel here wants a hand, and in a few weeks' practice I'll master the whole thing; my old yachting experiences have done that for me."

"My poor Tony," said Skeffy, rising and throwing his arms round him, "I'll not listen to it. What! when you have a home here with me, are you to go off and brave hardship and misery and degradation?"

"There's not one of the three—I deny it. Coarse food and hard work are no misery; and I'll be hanged if there's any degradation in earning one's bread with his hands when his head is not equal to it."

"I tell you I'll not suffer it. If you drive me to it, I'll prevent it by force. I am Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires. I'll order the consul to enrol you at his peril—I'll imprison the captain that takes you—I'll detain the ship, and put the crew in irons."

"Before you do half of it, let me have some dinner," said

Tony, laughing, "for I came on shore very hungry, and have eaten nothing since."

"I'll take you to my favourite restaurant, and you shall have a regular Neapolitan banquet, washed down by some old Capri. There, spell out that newspaper till I dress: and if any one rings in the meanwhile, say His Excellency has just been sent for to Caserta by the King, and will not be back before to-morrow." As he reached the door he put his head in again, and said, "Unless, perchance, it should be my godfather, when, of course, you'll keep him for dinner."

CHAPTER XLVI.

"THE BAG NO. 18."

ALMOST overlooking the terraced garden where Damer and Tony dined, and where they sat smoking till a late hour of the night, stood a large palace, whose vast proportions and spacious entrance, as well as an emblazoned shield over the door, proclaimed it to belong to the Government. It was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: and here now, in a room projecting over the street beneath, and supported on arches, sat the Minister himself, with our two acquaintances, Maitland and Caffarelli.

Maitland was still an invalid, and rested on a sofa, but he had recovered much of his former looks and manner, though he was dressed with less care than was his wont.

The Minister—a very tall thin man, stooped in the shoulders, and with a quantity of almost white grey hair streaming on his neck and shoulders—walked continually up and down the room, commenting and questioning, at times, as Maitland read forth from a mass of documents which littered the table, and with which Caffarelli supplied him, breaking the seals and tearing open the envelopes before he gave them to his hand.

Though Maitland read with ease, there was yet that half-hesitation in the choice of a word, as he went on, that showed he was translating; and indeed once or twice the Prince-Minister stopped to ask if he had rightly imparted all the intended force to a particular expression.

A white canvas bag, marked "F. O., No. 18," lay on the table; and it was of that same bag, and its possible fortunes, two others, not fully one hundred yards off, were then talking: so is it, that in life we are often so near to, and so remote from, the inanimate object around which our thoughts and hopes, and sometimes our very destinies, revolve.

"I am afraid," said the Prince, at last, "that we have got nothing here but the formal despatches, of which Ludolf has sent us copies already. Are there no 'Private and Confidentials'?"

"Yes, here is one for Sir Joseph Trevor himself," said Caffarelli, handing a square-shaped letter to Maitland. Maitland glanced hurriedly over it, and muttered, "London gossip, Craddock's divorce case, the partridge-shooting—ah, here it is! 'I suppose you are right about the expedition, but say nothing of it in the despatches. We shall be called on one of these days for a blue-book, and very blue we should look, if it were seen that amidst our wise counsels to Caraffa we were secretly aware of what G. was preparing.'"

"It must be 'C. was preparing,'" broke in Caraffa; "it means Cavour."

"No; he speaks of Garibaldi," said Maitland.

"Garibaldi!" cried Caraffa, laughing. "And are there still *gobemouches* in England who believe in the Filibuster?"

"I believe in him, for one," said Maitland, fiercely, for the phrase irritated him; "and I say, too, that such a Filibuster on our side would be worth thirty thousand of those great hulking grenadiers you passed in review this morning."

"Don't tell the King so when you wait on him to-morrow, that's all!" said the Minister, with a sneering smile.

"Read on," broke in Caffarelli, who was not at all sure what the discussion might lead to.

"Perhaps, too, you would class Count Cavour amongst these *gobemouches*," said Maitland, angrily; "for he is also a believer in Garibaldi."

"We can resume this conversation at Caserta to-morrow before his majesty," said Caraffa, with the same mocking smile; "pray, now, let me hear the remainder of that despatch."

"'It is not easy to say,'" read he aloud from the letter, "'what France intends or wishes. C. says——'"

"Who is C.?" asked Caraffa, hastily.

"C. means Cowley, probably,—'that the Emperor would not willingly see Piedmontese troops at Naples; nor is he prepared to witness a new map of the Peninsula. We, of course, will do nothing either way.'"

"Read that again," broke in Caraffa.

"'We, of course, will do nothing either way; but that resolve is not to prevent your tendering counsel with a high hand, all the more since the events which the next few months will develop will all of them seem of our provoking, and part and parcel of a matured and long meditated policy.'"

"*Benissimo!*" cried the minister, rubbing his hands in delight. "If we reform, it is the Whigs have reformed us. If we fall, it is the Whigs have crushed us."

"'Caraffa, we are told,'" continued Maitland, "'sees the danger, but is outvoted by the Queen-Dowager's party in the Cabinet—not to say that, from his great intimacy with Pietri, many think him more of a Muratist than a Bourbon.'"

"*Per Bacco!* when your countryman tries to be acute, there is nothing too hazardous for his imagination; so, then, I am a French spy!"

"'What you say of the army,'" read on Maitland, "'is confirmed by our other reports. Very few of the line regiments will be faithful to the monarchy, and even some of the artillery will go over. As to the fleet, Martin tells me they have not three seaworthy ships in the fifty-seven they reckon, nor six captains who would undertake a longer voyage than Palermo. Their only three-decker was afraid to return a salute to the *Pasha*, lest her old thirty two-pounders should explode; and this is pretty much the case with the monarchy—the first shock must shake it, even though it only come of blank cartridge.

"'While events are preparing, renew all your remonstrances; press upon Caraffa the number of untried prisoners, and the horrid condition of the prisons. Ask, of course in a friendly way, when are these abuses to cease? Say that great hopes of amelioration—speak generally—were conceived here on the accession of the new king, and throw in our regrets that the liberty of the press with us will occasionally lead to strictures whose severities we deplore, without being able to arraign their justice; and lastly, declare our readiness to meet any commercial exchanges that might promise mutual advantage. This will suggest the belief that we are not in any way cognizant of Cavour's projects. In fact, I will know nothing of them, and hold myself prepared, if questioned in the House, to have had no other information than is supplied by the newspapers. Who is Maitland? None of the Maitlands here can tell me.'" This sentence he read out ere he knew it, and almost crushed the paper, when he had finished in his passion.

"Go on," said Caraffa, as the other ceased to read aloud, while his eyes ran over the lines. "Go on."

"It is of no moment, or at least its interest is purely personal. His lordship recommends that I should be bought over, but still left in intimate relations with your excellency."

"And I see no possible objection to the plan."

"Don't you, sir?" cried Maitland, fiercely; "then I do. Some little honour is certainly needed to leaven the rottenness that reeks around us."

"*Caro Signor Conte,*" said the Prince, in an insinuating voice, but of which insincerity was the strong characteristic, "do not be angry with my Ultramontane morality: I was not reared on the virtuous benches of a British Parliament: but if there is anything more in that letter, let me hear it."

"There is only a warning not to see the Count of Syracuse, nor any of his party, who are evidently waiting to see which horse is to win. Ah, and here is a word for your address, Carlo! 'If Caffarelli be the man we saw last season here, I should say, Do not make advances to him; he is a ruined gambler, and trusted by no party. Lady C—— believes in him, but none else!'"

This last paragraph set them all a-laughing, nor did any seem to enjoy it more than Caffarelli himself.

"One thing is clear," said Caraffa at last, "England wishes us every imaginable calamity, but is not going to charge herself with any part of the cost of our ruin. France has only so much of goodwill towards us as is inspired by her dislike of Piedmont, and she will wait and watch events. Now, if Bosco be only true to his word, and can give us a 'good account' of his treatment of Garibaldi, I think all will go well."

"When was Garibaldi to set out?" asked Caffarelli.

"Brizzi, but he is seldom correct, said the 18th."

"That Irish fellow of ours, Maitland, is positive it will be by the 13th at latest. By the way, when I asked him how I could reward this last piece of service he rendered us in securing these despatches, his reply was, 'I want the cordon of St. Januarius.' I of course remonstrated, and explained that there were certain requisites as to birth and family, certain guarantees as to nobility of blood, certain requirements of fortune. He stopped me abruptly, and said, 'I can satisfy them all; and if there be any delay in according my demand, I shall make it in person to his Majesty.'"

"Well," cried Caffarelli—"well, and what followed?'

"I yielded," said the Prince, with one of his peculiar smiles. "We are in such a perilous predicament that we can't afford the enmity of such a consummate rascal; and then, who knows but he may be the last knight of the order!" In the deep depression of the last words was apparent their true sincerity, but he rallied hastily, and said, "I have sent the fellow to Bosco with despatches, and said that he may be usefully employed as a spy, for he is hand-and-glove with all the Garibaldians. Surely he must have uncommon good luck if he escapes a bullet from one side or the other."

"He told me yesterday," said Caffarelli, "that he would not leave Naples till his Majesty passed the Irish Legion in review, and addressed them some words of loyal compliment."

"Why didn't he tell you," said the Prince, sarcastically, "that seventy of the scoundrels have taken service with Garibaldi; some hundreds have gone to the hills as brigands; and Castel d'Ovo has got the remainder; and it takes fifteen hundred foot and a brigade of artillery to watch them?"

"Did you hear this, Maitland?" cried Caffarelli; "do you hear what his Excellency says of your pleasant countrymen?"

Maitland looked up from a letter that he was deeply engaged in, and so blank and vacant was his stare that Caffarelli repeated what the Minister had just said. "I don't think you are minding what I say. Have you heard me, Maitland?"

"Yes; no—that is, my thoughts were on something that I was reading here."

"Is it of interest to us?" asked Caraffa.

"None whatever. It was a private letter which got into my hands open, and I had read some lines before I was well aware. It has no bearing on politics, however;" and, crushing up the note, he placed it in his pocket, and then, as if recalling his mind to the affairs before him, said: "The King himself must go to Sicily. It is no time to palter. The personal daring of Victor Emmanuel is the bone and sinew of the Piedmontese movement. Let us show the North that the South is her equal in everything."

"I should rather that it was from *you* the advice came than from *me*," said Caraffa, with a grin. "I am not in the position to proffer it."

"If I were Prince Caraffa I should do so, assuredly."

"You would not, Maitland," said the other calmly. "You would not, and for this simple reason, that you would see that, even if accepted, the counsel would be fruitless. If it were to the Queen, indeed ——"

"Yes, *per Bacco!*" broke in Caffarelli, "there is not a gentleman in the kingdom would not spring into the saddle at such a call."

"Then why not unfold this standard?" asked Maitland. "Why not make one effort to make the monarchy popular?"

"Don't you know enough of Naples," said Caraffa, "to know that the cause of the noble can never be the cause of the people; and that to throw the throne for defence on the men of birth is to lose the 'men of the street?'" He paused, and with an expression of intense hate on his face, and a hissing

passionate tone in his voice, continued, "It required all the consummate skill of that great man, Count Cavour, to weld the two classes together, and even he could not elevate the populace; so that nothing was left to him but to degrade the noble."

"I think meanwhile we are losing precious time," said Maitland, as he took up his hat. "Bosco should be reinforced. The squadron, too, should be strengthened to meet the Sardinian fleet; for we have sure intelligence that they mean to cover Garibaldi's landing; Persano avows it."

"All the better if they do," said Caraffa. "The same act which would proclaim their own treachery would deliver into our hands this hare-brained adventurer."

"Your Excellency may have him longer in your hands than you care for," said Maitland, with a saucy smile. The Prince bowed a cold acknowledgment of the speech, and suffered them to retire without a word.

"It is fated, I believe," said Caffarelli, as they gained the street, "that the Prince and you are never to separate without anger; and you are wrong, Maitland. There is no man stands so high in the King's favour."

"What care I for that, Carlo mio? the whole thing has ceased to interest me. I joined the cause without any love for it; the more nearly I saw its working, the more I despised myself for acting with such associates; and if I hold to it now, it is because it is so certain to fail. Ay, my friend, it is another Bourbon bowled over. The age had got sick of vested interests, and wanted to show what abuses they were; but you and I are bound to stand fast; we cannot rescue the victim, but we must follow the hearse."

"How low and depressed you are to-night! What has come over you?"

"I have had a heavy blow, mio Carlo. One of those papers whose envelopes you broke and handed to me was a private letter. It was from Alice Trafford to her brother; and the sight of my own name in it tempted me to see what she said of me. My curiosity has paid its price." He paused for some minutes, and then continued: "She wrote to refuse the villa I had offered her—to refuse it peremptorily. She added, 'The story of your friend's duel is more public than you seem to know. It appeared in the *Patrie* three weeks ago, and was partly extracted by *Galignani*. The provocation given was an open declaration that Mr. Maitland was no Maitland at all, but the illegitimate son of a well-known actress, called Brancaleone,

the father unknown. This outrage led to a meeting, and the consequences you know of. The whole story has this much of authenticity, that it was given to the world with the name of the other principal, who signs himself Milo M'Caskey, Lieut.-Col. in the service of Naples, Count, and Commander of various orders.' She adds," continued Maitland, in a shaken voice, and an effort, but yet a poor one, to smile—"she adds, 'I own I am sorry for him. All his great qualities and cultivation seemed to suit and dignify station; but now that I know his condition to have been a mere assumption, the man himself and his talents are only a mockery—only a mockery!' Hard words these, Carlo, very hard words!

"And then she says: 'If I had only known him as a passing acquaintance, and thought of him with the same indifference one bestows on such, perhaps I would not now insist so peremptorily as I do on our ceasing to know him; but I will own to you, Mark, that he did interest me greatly. He had, or seemed to have,'——this, that, and t'other," said he, with an ill-tempered haste, and went on. "'But now, as he stands before me, with a borrowed name and a mock rank'——There is half a page more of the same trash; for this gentle lady is a mistress of fierce words, and not over-merciful, and she ends thus:—'I think, if you are adroit, you can show him, in declining his proffered civility, that we had strong reasons for our refusal, and that it would be unpleasant to renew our former acquaintance.' In fact, Carlo, she means to cut me. This woman, whose hand I had held in mine while I declared my love, and who, while she listened to me, showed no touch of displeasure, affects now to resent the accident of my birth, and treat me as an impostor! I am half sorry that letter has not reached its destination; ay, and, strange as you will think it, I am more than half-tempted to write and tell her that I have read it. The story of the stolen dispatch will soon be a newspaper scandal, and it would impart marvellous interest to her reading it when she heard that her own 'private and confidential' was captured in the same net."

"You could not own to such an act, Maitland."

"No. If it should not lead to something further; but I do yearn to repay her. She is a haughty adversary, and well worth a vengeance."

"What becomes of your fine maxim, 'Never quarrel with a woman,' Maitland?"

"When I uttered it, I had never loved one," muttered he; and they walked on now in silence.

Almost within earshot—so close, indeed, that had they not been conversing in Italian, some of their words must have been overheard by those behind—walked two other friends, Damer and Tony in close confab.

"I must telegraph F. O.," said Skeffy, "that bag is missing, and that Messenger Butler has gone home to make his report. Do you hear me?"

A grunt was the reply.

"I'll give you a letter to Howard Pendleton, and he'll tell what is the best thing to be done."

"I suspect I know it already," muttered Tony.

"If you could only persuade my lord to listen to you, and tell him the story as you told it to me, he'd be more than a Secretary of State if he could stand it."

"I have no great desire to be laughed at, Skeffy."

"Not if it got you out of a serious scrape—a scrape that may cost you your appointment?"

"Not even at that price."

"I can't understand that; it is quite beyond me. They might put *me* into 'Joe Miller' to-morrow, if they'd only gazette me Secretary of Embassy the day after. But here's the hotel; a good sleep will set you all right; and let me see you at breakfast as jolly as you used to be."

CHAPTER XLVII.

ADRIFT.

The dawn was scarcely breaking as Tony Butler awoke and set off to visit the ships in the port whose flags proclaimed them English. There were full thirty, of various sizes and rigs; but though many were deficient in hands, no skipper seemed disposed to accept a young fellow who, if he was stalwart and well grown, so palpably pertained to a class to which hard work and coarse usage were strangers.

"You ain't anything of a cook, are you?" asked one of the very few who did not reject his demand at once.

"No," said he, smiling.

"Them hands of yours might do something in the caboose, but they ain't much like reefing and clewing topsails. Won't suit *me*." And, thus discouraged, he went on from one craft to the other, surprised and mortified to discover that one of the resources he had often pictured to his mind in the hours of despondency was just as remote, just as much above him as any of the various callings his friends had set before him.

"Not able to be even a sailor! Not fit to serve before the mast! Well, perhaps I can carry a musket; but for *that* I must return to England."

He fell to think of this new scheme, but without any of that hope that had so often coloured his projects. He owed the service a grudge. His father had not been fairly treated in it. So at least, from his very childhood, had his mother taught him to believe, and, in consequence, vehemently opposed all his plans to obtain a commission. Hard necessity, however, left no room for mere scruples; something he must do, and that something was narrowed to the one single career of a soldier.

He was practical enough in a certain sense, and he soon resolved on his line of action; he would reserve just so much as would carry him back to England, and remit the remainder of what he had to his mother.

This would amount to nigh eighty pounds—a very considerable sum to one whose life was as inexpensive as hers. The

real difficulty was how to reconcile her to the thought of his fallen condition, and the hardships she would inevitably associate in her mind with his future life. "Ain't I lucky," cried he, in his bitterness, and trying to make it seem like a consolation—"ain't I lucky, that, except my poor dear mother, I have not one other in the whole world to care what comes to me—none other to console, none other before whom I need plead or excuse myself! My failure or my disgrace are not to spread a widecast sorrow. They will only darken one fireside, and one figure in the corner of it."

His heart was full of Alice all the while, but he was too proud to utter her name even to himself. To have made a resolve, however, seemed to rally his courage again; and when the boatman asked him where he should go next, he was so far away in his thoughts that he had some difficulty to remember what he had been actually engaged in.

"Where to?"

"Well, I can't well tell you," said he, laughing. "Isn't that schooner English—that one getting under way yonder? Shove me aboard of her."

"She's outward bound, sir."

"No matter, if they'll agree to take me," muttered he to himself.

The craft was "hauling short" on the anchor as Tony came alongside and learned that she was about to sail for Leghorn, having failed in obtaining a freight at Naples; and as by an accident one of the crew had been left on shore, the skipper was too willing to take Tony so far, though looking, as he remarked, far more like a swell landsman than an ordinary seaman.

Once outside the bay, and bowling along with a smart breeze and a calm sea, the rushing water making pleasant music at the bow, while the helm left a long white track some feet down beneath the surface, Tony felt, what so many others have felt, the glorious elation of being at sea. How many a care "blue water" can assuage, how many a sorrow is made bearable by the fresh breeze that strains the cordage, and the laughing waves we cleave through so fast.

A few very eventful days, in which Tony's life passed less like reality than a mere dream, brought them to Leghorn; and the skipper, who had taken a sort of rough liking to the "Swell," as he still called him, offered to take him on to Liverpool, if he were willing to enter himself regularly on the ship's books as one of the crew.

"I am quite ready," said Tony, who thought by the time the

brief voyage was completed he should have picked up enough of the practice and the look of a sailor to obtain another employment easily.

Accompanied by the skipper, he soon found himself in the consul's office, crowded with sailors and other maritime folk, busily engaged in preferring complaints or making excuses, or as eagerly asking for relief against this or that exaction on the part of the foreign government.

The consul sat smoking his cigar with a friend at a window, little heeding the turmoil around, but leaving the charge of the various difficulties to his clerks, who only referred to him on some special occasions.

"Here's a man, sir," cried one of the clerks, "who wishes to be entered in the ship's books under an assumed name. I have told him it can't be done."

"Why does he ask it? Is he a runaway convict?" asked the consul.

"Not exactly," said Tony, laughing; "but as I have not been brought up before the mast, and I have a few relatives who might not like to hear of me in that station——"

"A scamp, I take," broke in the consul, "who, having done his worst on shore, takes to the sea for a refuge?"

"Partly right—partly wrong," was the dry answer.

"Well, my smart fellow, there's no help for it. You must give your name and your birthplace; and if they should prove false ones, take any consequences that might result."

"What sort of consequences might these be?" asked Tony, calmly; and the consul, having either spoken without any distinct knowledge attached to his words, or provoked by the pertinacity of the question, half irritably answered—"I've no time to throw away in discussing casualties—give your name or go your way."

"Yes, yes," murmured the skipper. "Who knows anything about you down here?—just sign the sheet and let's be moving."

The sort of good-humoured tone and look that went with the words decided Tony, and he took the pen and wrote "Tony Butler, Ireland."

The consul glanced at the writing, and said, "What part of Ireland? name a town or a village."

"I cannot; my father was a soldier, quartered in various places, and I'm not sure in what part of the island I was born."

"Tony Butler means Anthony Butler, I suppose?"

"Tony Butler!" cried the consul's friend, suddenly starting up, and coming forward; "did *you* say your name was Tony Butler?"

"Yes; that is my name."

"And are you from the north of Ireland—near the Causeway?"

Tony nodded, while a flush of shame at the recognition covered his face.

"And do you know Dr. Stewart, the Presbyterian minister in that neighbourhood?"

"I should think so. The Burnside, where he lives, is not above a mile from us."

"That's it—the Burnside—that's the name of it. I'm as glad as fifty pounds in my pocket to see you, Mr. Butler," cried he, grasping Tony's hand in both his own. "There's not a man from this to England I'd as soon have met as yourself. I'm Sam M'Gruder, Robert M'Gruder's brother. You haven't forgot *him*, I hope?"

"That I haven't," cried Tony, warmly returning the honest pressure of the other's hand. "What a stupid dog I have been not to remember that you lived here! and I have a letter for you, too, from your brother!"

"I want no letter of introduction with *you*, Mr. Butler; come home with me. You're not going to sea this time;" and, taking a pen, he drew a broad line of ink across Tony's name; and then turning, he whispered a few words in the consul's ear.

"I hope," said the consul, "Mr. Butler is not offended at the freedom with which I commented on him."

"Not in the least," said Tony, laughing. "I thought at the time, if you knew me you would not have liked to have suggested my having been a runaway convict; and now that you *do* know me, the shame you feel is more than enough to punish you."

"What could have induced you to go before the mast, Mr. Butler?" said M'Gruder, as he led Tony away.

"Sheer necessity. I wanted to earn my bread."

"But you had got something—some place or other?"

"I was a messenger, but I lost my despatches, and was ashamed to go home and say so."

"Will you stop with me? Will you be a clerk?" asked the other; and a certain timidity in his voice showed that he was not quite assured as he spoke. "My business is like my brother's—we're 'in rags.'"

"And so should I be in a few days," laughed out Tony, "if I hadn't met you. I'll be your clerk, with a heart and a half—that is, if I be capable; only don't give me anything where money enters, and as little writing as possible, and no arithmetic, if you can help it."

"That will be a strange sort of clerkship," said M'Gruder, with a smile; "but we'll see what can be done."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"IN RAGS."

If Tony Butler's success in his new career only depended on his zeal, he would have been a model clerk. Never did any one address himself to a new undertaking with a stronger resolution to comprehend all its details, and conquer all its difficulties. First of all, he desired to show his gratitude to the good fellow who had helped him; and secondly, he was eager to prove, if proven it could be, that he was not utterly incapable of earning his bread, nor one of those hopeless creatures who are doomed from their birth to be a burden to others.

So long as his occupation led him out of doors, conveying orders here and directions there, he got on pretty well. He soon picked up a sort of Italian of his own, intelligible enough to those accustomed to it; and as he was alert, active, and untiring, he looked, at least, a most valuable assistant. Whenever it came to indoor work and the pen, his heart sank within him; he knew that his hour of trial had come, and he had no strength to meet it. He would mistake the letter-book for the ledger or the day-book; and he would make entries in one which should have been in the other, and then, worst of all, erase them, or append an explanation of his blunder that would fill half a page, with inscrutable blottedness.

As to payments, he jotted them down anywhere, and in his anxiety to compose confidential letters with due care, he would usually make three or four rough drafts of the matter, quite sufficient to impart the contents to the rest of the office.

Sam M'Gruder bore nobly up under these trials. He sometimes laughed at the mistakes, did his best to remedy—never rebuked them. At last, as he saw that poor Tony's difficulties, instead of diminishing, only increased with time, inasmuch as his despair of himself led him into deeper embarrassments, M'Gruder determined Tony should be entirely employed in journeys and excursions here and there through the country—an occupation, it is but fair to own, invented to afford him employment, rather than necessitated by any demands of the

business. Not that Tony had the vaguest suspicion of this. Indeed, he wrote to his mother a letter filled with an account of his active and useful labours. Proud was he at last to say that he was no longer eating the bread of idleness. "I am up before dawn, mother, and very often have nothing to eat but a mess of Indian corn steeped in oil, not unlike what Sir Arthur used to fatten the bullocks with, the whole livelong day; and sometimes I have to visit places there are no roads to; nearly all the villages are on the tops of the mountains; but, by good luck, I am never beat by a long walk, and I do my forty miles a day without minding it.

"If I could only forget the past, dearest mother, or think it nothing but a dream, I'd never quarrel with the life I am now leading; for I have plenty of open air, mountain walking, abundance of time to myself, and rough fellows to deal with, that amuse me; but when I am tramping along with my cigar in my mouth, I can't help thinking of long ago—of the rides at sunset on the sands, and all the hopes and fancies I used to bring home with me, after them. Well! it is over now—just as much done for as if the time had never been at all; and I suppose, after a while, I'll learn to bear it better, and think, as you often told me, that 'all things are for the best.'

"I feel my own condition more painfully when I come back here, and have to sit a whole evening listening to Sam M'Gruder, talking about Dolly Stewart and the plans about their marriage. The poor fellow is so full of it all, that even the important intelligence I have for him he won't hear, but will say, 'Another time, Tony, another time—let us chat about Dolly.' One thing I'll swear to, she'll have the honestest fellow for her husband that ever stepped, and tell her I said so. Sam would take it very kindly of you if you could get Dolly to agree to their being married in March. It is the only time he can manage a trip to England—not but, as he says, whatever time Dolly consents to shall be his time.

"He shows me her letters, sometimes, and though he is half wild with delight at them, I tell you frankly, mother, they wouldn't satisfy *me* if *I* was her lover. She writes more like a creature that was resigned to a hard lot, than one that was about to marry a man she loved. Sam, however, doesn't seem to take this view of her, and so much the better.

"There was one thing in your last letter that puzzled me, and puzzles me still. Why did Dolly ask if I was likely to remain here? The way you put it makes me think that she was deferring the marriage till such time as I was gone. If I really

believed this to be the case, I'd go away to-morrow, though I don't know well where to, or what for, but it is hard to understand, since I always thought that Dolly liked me, as certainly I ever did, and still do, *her*.

"Try and clear up this for me in your next. I suppose it was by way of what is called 'sparing me,' you said nothing of the Lyles in your last, but I saw in the *Morning Post* all about the departure for the Continent, intending to reside some years in Italy.

"And that is more than I'd do if I owned Lyle Abbey, and had eighteen blood-horses in my stable, and a clipper cutter in the Bay of Curryglass. I suppose the truth is, people never do know when they're well off."

The moral reflection, not arrived at so easily or so rapidly as the reader may imagine, concluded Tony's letter, to which in due time came a long answer from his mother. With the home gossip we shall not burden the reader, nor shall we ask of him to go through the short summary—four close pages—of the doctor's discourses on the text, "I would ye were hot or cold," two sensations that certainly the mere sight of the exposition occasioned to Tony. We limit ourselves to the words of the postscript.

"I cannot understand Dolly at all, and I am afraid to mislead you as to what you ask. My impression is—but mind, it is mere impression—she has grown somewhat out of her old friendship for you. Some stories possibly have represented you in a wrong light, and I half think you may be right, and that she would be less averse to the marriage if she knew you were not to be in the house with them. It was, indeed, only this morning the doctor said, 'Young married folk should aye learn each other's failings without bystanders to observe them'—a significant hint I thought I would write to you by this post."

When Tony received his epistle, he was seated in his own room, leisurely engaged in deciphering a paragraph in an Italian newspaper, descriptive of Garibaldi's departure from a little bay near Genoa to his Sicilian expedition.

Nothing short of a letter from his mother could have withdrawn his attention from a description so full of intense interest to him; and partly, indeed, from this cause, and partly from the hard labour of rendering the foreign language, the details stuck in his mind during all the time he was reading his mother's words.

"So that's the secret, is it?" muttered he. "Dolly wishes

to be alone with her husband—natural enough; and I'm not the man to oppose it. I hope she'll be happy, poor girl; and I hope Garibaldi will beat the Neapolitans. I'm sure Sam is worthy of a good wife; but I don't know whether these Sicilian fellows deserve a better Government. At all events, my course is clear—here I mustn't stay. Sam does not know that I am the obstacle to his marriage; but *I* know it, and that is enough. I wonder would Garibaldi take me as a volunteer? There cannot be much choice at such a time. I suppose he enrols whoever offers; and they must be mostly fellows of my own sort—useless dogs, that are only fit to give and take hard knocks."

He hesitated long whether he should tell Sam M'Gruder of his project; he well knew all the opposition he should meet, and how stoutly his friend would set himself against a plan so fatal to all habits of patient industry. "And yet," muttered Tony to himself, "I don't like to tell him that I hate 'rags,' and detest the whole business. It would be so ungrateful of me. I could say my mother wanted to see me in Ireland; but I never told him a lie, and I can't bear that our parting should be sealed with a falsehood."

As he pondered, he took out his pistols and examined them carefully; and poising one neatly in his hand, he raised it, as marksmen sometimes will do, to take an imaginary aim. As he did so, M'Gruder entered, and cried out, laughing, "Is he covered—is he dead?"

Tony laid down the weapon, with a flush of shame, and said, "After all, M'Gruder, the pistol is more natural to me than the pen; and it was just what I was going to confess to you."

"You're not going to take to the highways, though?"

"Something not very unlike it; I mean to go and have a turn with Garibaldi."

"Why, what do you know about Garibaldi or his cause?"

"Perhaps not a great deal; but I've been spelling out these newspapers every night, and one thing is clear, whether he has right or wrong on his side, the heavy odds are all against him. He's going in to fight regular troops with a few hundred trampers. Now I call that very plucky."

"So do I; but courage may go on to rashness, and become folly."

"Well, I feel as if a little rashness will do me a deal of good. I am too well off here—too easy—too much cared for. Life asks no effort, and I make none; and if I go on a little longer, I'll be capable of none."

"I see," said the other, laughing, "Rags do not rouse your ambition, Tony."

"I don't know what would—that is, I don't think I *have* any ambition now;" and there was a touch of sorrow in the last word that gave all the force to what he said.

"At all events, you are tired of this sort of thing," said the other, good-humouredly, "and it's not to be much wondered at. You began life at what my father used to call 'the wrong end.' You started on the sunny side of the road, Tony, and it is precious hard to cross over into the shade afterwards."

"You're right there, M'Gruder. I led the jolliest life that ever man did till I was upwards of twenty; but I don't believe I ever knew how glorious it was till it was over; but I mustn't think of that now. See! this is what I mean to do. You'll find some way to send that safely to my mother. There's forty odd pounds in it, and I'd rather it was not lost. I have kept enough to buy a good rifle—a heavy Swiss one, if I can find it—and a sword-bayonet, and with these I am fully equipped."

"Come, come, Tony, I'll not hear of this; that you are well weary of the life you lead here is not hard to see, nor any blame to you either, old fellow. One must be brought up to Rags, like everything else, and *you* were not. But my brother writes me about starting an American agency—what do you say to going over to New York?"

"What a good fellow you are!" cried Tony, staring at him till his eyes began to grow clouded with tears; "what a good fellow! you'd risk your ship just to give me a turn at the tiller! But it mustn't be—it cannot be: I'm bent on this scheme of mine—I have determined on it."

"Since when? since last night?"

"Well, it's not very long, certainly, since I made up my mind."

The other smiled. Tony saw it, and went on: I know what you mean. You are of old Stewart's opinion. When he heard me once say I had made up my mind, he said, 'It doesn't take long to make up a small parcel;' but every fellow, more or less, knows what he can and what he cannot do. Now I cannot be orderly, exact, and punctual—even the little brains I have I can't be sure of keeping them on the matter before me: but I defy a horse to throw me; I'll bring you up a crown-piece out of six fathoms water, if it's clear; I'll kill four swallows out of six with a ball; and though these are not gifts to earn one's bread by, the man that has them needn't starve."

"If I thought that you had really reflected well over this plan — given it all the thought and consideration it required——"

"I have given it just as much consideration as if I took five weeks to it. A man may take an evening over a pint of ale, but it's only a pint after all—don't you see that?"

M'Gruder was puzzled; perhaps there was some force in the illustration. Tony looked certainly as if he thought he had said a clever thing.

"Well, Tony," said the other, after a moment of grave thought, "you'll have to go to Genoa to embark, I suppose?"

"Yes; the committee sits at Genoa, and every one who enrols must appear before them."

"You could walk there in four days."

"Yes; but I can steam it in one."

"Ay, true enough; what I mean to ask of you is this, that you will go the whole way on foot; a good walker as you are won't think much of that; and in these four days, as you travel along—all alone—you'll have plenty of time to think over your project. If by the time you reach Genoa you like it as well as ever, I've no more to say; but if—and mark me, Tony, you must be honest with your own heart—if you really have your doubts and your misgivings; if you feel that for your poor mother's sake ——"

"There, there! I've thought of all that," cried Tony, hurriedly. "I'll make the journey on foot, as you say you wish it, but don't open the thing to any more discussion. If I relent, I'll come back. There's my hand on it!"

"Tony, it gives me a sad heart to part with you," and he turned away, and stole out of the room.

"Now, I believe it's all done," said Tony, after he had packed his knapsack, and stored by in his trunk what he intended to leave behind him. There were a few things there, too, that had their own memories! There was the green silk cap, with its gold tassel, Alice had given him on his last steeple-chase. Ah, how it brought back the leap—a bold leap it was—into the winning field, and Alice, as she stood up and waved her handkerchief as he passed! There was a glove of hers; she had thrown it down sportively on the sands, and dared him to take it up in full career of his horse; he remembered they had a quarrel because he claimed the glove as a prize, and refused to restore it to her. There was an evening after that in which she would not speak to him. He had carried a heavy heart home

with him that night! What a fund of love the heart must be capable of feeling for a living, sentient thing, when we see how it can cling to some object inanimate and irresponsive. "I'll take that glove with me," muttered Tony to himself; "it owes me some good luck: who knows but it may pay me yet?"

CHAPTER XLIX.

MET AND PARTED.

Tony went on his way early next morning, stealing off ere it was yet light, for he hated leave-takings, and felt that they weighed upon him for many a mile of a journey. There was enough on the road he travelled to have interested and amused him, but his heart was too full of its own cares, and his mind too deep in its own plans, to dispose him to such pleasures, and so he passed through little villages on craggy eminences and quaint old towers on mountain-tops, scarcely observing them. Even Pisa, with its world-known Tower, and the gem-like Baptistry beside it, scarce attracted notice from him, though he muttered as he passed, "Perhaps on some happier day I'll be able to come back here and admire it." And so onward he plodded through the grand old ruined Massa and the silent Sarzana, whose palaces display the quarterings of old crusading knights, with many an emblem of the Holy War; and by the beauteous Bay of Spezia he went, not stopping to see poor Shelley's home, and the terrace where his midnight steps had almost worn a track. The road now led through the declining ridges of the Apennines, gorgeous in colour—such colour as art would have scarce dared to counterfeit, so emerald the dark green of the waving pines, so silver-like the olive, so gloriously purple the great cliffs of porphyry; and then through many a riven cleft, through feathery foliage and broad-leaved fig-trees, down many a fathom low the sea!—the blue Mediterranean, so blue as to seem another sky of deeper meaning than the one above it.

He noticed little of all these—he felt none of them! It was now the third day of his journey, and though he had scarcely uttered a word, and been deeply intent on his own fate, all that his thinking had done was to lead, as it were, into some boundless prairie, and there desert him.

"I suppose," muttered he to himself, "I am one of those creatures that must never presume to plan anything, but take each day's life as I find it. And I could do this. Ay, I could

do it manfully, too, if I were not carrying along with me memories of long ago. It is Alice, the thought of Alice, that dashes the present with a contrast to the past, and makes all I now attempt so poor and valueless."

As the road descends from Borghetto there is a sudden bend, from which, through a deep cleft, the little beach and village of Levanto are seen hundreds of feet beneath, but yet in that clear still atmosphere so near, that not only the white foam of the breaking wave could be seen, but it rhythm-like plash heard as it broke upon the beach. For the first time since he set out had the charm of scenery attracted him, and, descending a few feet from the road, he reached a large square rock, from which he could command the whole view for miles on every side.

He took out his bread and cheese and a melon he had bought that morning, and disposed himself to eat his dinner. He had often partaken of a more sumptuous meal, but never had he eaten with so glorious a prospect at his feet.

A little lateen-sailed boat stole out from beneath the olives and gained the sea; and as Tony watched her, he thought if he would only have been a fisherman there, and Alice his wife, how little he could have envied all that the world has of wealth and honours and ambitions. His friend Skeffy could not do this, but *he* could. *He* was strong of limb and stout of heart; he could bear hardships and cold; and it would be so fine to think that, born gentleman as he was, he never flinched from the hardest toil, or repined at the roughest fare, he and Alice treasuring up their secret, and hoarding it as a miser hoards his gold.

Ay, down there, in that little gorge, with the pine-wood behind and the sea before, he could have passed his life, with never a longing thought for the great world and its prizes. As he ran on thus in fancy, he never heard the sound of footsteps on the road above, nor noticed the voices of persons talking.

At last he heard, not the words, but the tone of the speakers, and recognized them to be English. There is that peculiar sound in English utterance that at once distinguishes it from all other speech, and Tony, quite forgetting that his high-peaked Calabrian hat and massive beard made him far more like an Italian brigand than a British gentleman, not wishing to be observed, never turned his head to look at them. At last one said, "The little fishing-village below there must be Levanto. John Murray tells us that this is the land of the fan palm and the cactus, so that at length we are in Italy."

"Do you know—shall I confess it," said the other, "that I am not thinking of the view, beautiful as it is? I am envying that peasant with his delicious melon on the rock there. I am half-tempted to ask him to share it with me."

"Ask him, by all means," said the first speaker, laughing.

"You are jesting," replied the other, "but I am in sober earnest. I can resist no longer. Do you, however, wait here, or the carriage may pass on and leave us behind."

Tony heard nothing of these words; but he heard the light footsteps, and he heard the rustle of a woman's dress as she forced her way, through bramble and underwood, till at last, with that consciousness so mysterious, he felt there was some one standing close behind him. Half vexed to think that his isolation should be invaded, he drew his hat deeper over his eyes, and sat steadfastly gazing on the sea below him.

"Is that Levanto I see beneath that cliff?" asked she, in atalian—less to satisfy her curiosity than to attract his attention.

Tony started. How intensely had his brain been charged with thoughts of long ago that every word that met his ears should seem impregnated with these memories! A half-sulky "Si" was, however, his only rejoinder.

"What a fine melon you have there, my friend!" said she; and now her voice thrilled through him so strangely, that he sprang to his feet and turned to face her. "Is my brain tricking me?—are my senses wandering?" muttered he to himself. "Alice, Alice!"

"Yes, Tony," cried she. "Who ever heard of so strange a meeting? How came you here? Speak, or I shall be as incredulous as yourself!" But Tony could not utter a word, but stood overwhelmed with wonder, silently gazing on her.

"Speak to me, Tony," said she, in her soft winning voice—"speak to me; tell me by what curious fortune you came here. Let us sit down on this bank; our carriage is toiling up the hill, and will not be here for some time."

"So it is not a dream!" sighed he, as he sat down beside her. "I have so little faith in my brain that I could not trust it."

It was easy to see that his bewilderment still remained; and so, with a woman's tact, she addressed herself to talking of what would gradually lead his thoughts into a collected shape. She told how they were all on their way to the south—Naples or Palermo, not certain which—somewhere for climate, as Isabella was still delicate. That her father and mother and sister were some miles behind on the road, she having come on

more rapidly with a lighter carriage. "Not all alone, though, Master Tony; don't put on that rebukeful face. The lady you see yonder on the road is what is called my companion—the English word for duenna; and I half think I am scandalizing her very much by this conduct of mine, sitting down on the grass with a brigand chief, and, I was going to say, sharing his breakfast, though I have to confess it never occurred to him to offer it. Come, Tony, get up, and let me present you to her, and relieve her mind of the terrible thoughts that must be distressing her."

"One moment, Alice—one moment," said he, taking her hand. "What is this story my mother tells me?" He stopped, unable to go on; but she quickly broke in, "Scandal travels quickly indeed: but I scarcely thought your mother was one to aid its journey."

"She never believed it," said he doggedly.

"Why repeat it, then? why give bad money currency? I think we had better join my friend. I see she is impatient."

The coldness with which she spoke chilled him like a wintry blast; but he rallied soon, and with a vigorous energy said, "My mother no more believed ill of you than I did; and when I asked you what the slander meant, it was to know where I could find the man to pay for it."

"You must deny yourself the pleasure this time, Tony," said she, laughing. "It was a woman's story—a disappointed woman—and so, not so very blameable as she might be; not but that it was true in fact."

"True, Alice—true?"

"Yes, sir. The inference from it was the only falsehood; but really we have had too much of this. Tell me of yourself—why are you here? where are you now going?"

"You've heard of my exploits as a messenger, I suppose," said Tony, with a bitter laugh.

"I heard, as we all heard with great sorrow, that you left the service," said she, with a hesitation on each word.

"Left it? Yes; I left to avoid being kicked out of it. I lost my despatches, and behaved like a fool. Then I tried to turn sailor, but no skipper would take me; and I *did* turn clerk, and half-ruined the honest fellow that trusted me. And now I am going—in good truth, Alice, I don't exactly know where, but it is somewhere in search of a pursuit to fit a fellow who begins to feel he is fit for nothing."

"It is not thus your friends think of you, Tony," said she, kindly.

"That's the worst of it," rejoined he, bitterly: "I have all my life been trying to justify an opinion that never should have been formed of me—ay, and that I well knew I had no right to."

"Well, Tony, come back with us. I don't say with *me*, because I must be triple discreet for some time to come; but come back with papa; he'll be overjoyed to have you with us."

"No, no," muttered Tony in a faint whisper; "I could not, I could not."

"Is that old grudge of long ago so deep that time has not filled it up?"

"I could not, I could not," muttered he, evidently not hearing the words she had just spoken.

"And why not, Tony? Just tell me why not?"

"Shall I tell you, Alice?" said he; and his lip shook and his cheek grew pale as he spoke—"shall I tell you?"

She nodded; for she too was moved, and did not trust herself to speak.

"Shall I tell you?" said he, and he looked into her eyes with a meaning so full of love, and yet of sorrow, that her cheek became crimson, and she turned away in shame.

"No, Tony," whispered she, faintly, "better not say—what might pain us both, perhaps."

"Enough, if you know," said he, faintly.

"There, see my friend has lost all patience; come up to the road, Tony. She must see that my interview has been with an English gentleman, and not a brigand chief. Give me your arm, and do not look so sulky."

"You women can look any way you will," mumbled he, "no matter what you may feel; that is, if you *do* feel."

"You are the same old savage, Tony, as ever," said she laughing. "I never got my melon, after all, Miss Lester; the sight of an old friend was, however, better. Let me present him to you—Mr. Butler."

"Mr. Tony Butler?" asked she, with a peculiar smile; and though she spoke it low, he heard her, and said, "Yes; I am Tony Butler."

"Sir Arthur will be charmed to know you are here. It was but yesterday he said he'd not mind taking a run through Calabria if we only had you with us."

"I have said all that and more to him, but he doesn't mind it," said Alice.

"Is this fair, Alice?" whispered he.

"In fact," resumed she, "he has nowhere particular to go to, provided it be not the same road that we are taking."

"Is this kind, Alice?" whispered he again.

"And though I have told him what pleasure it would give us all if he would turn back with us——"

"You'll drive me to say it," muttered he between his teeth.

"If you dare, sir," said she, in a low but clear whisper; and now she stepped into the carriage, and affected to busy herself with her mufflers. Tony assisted Miss Lister to her place, and then walked round to the side where Alice sat.

"You are not angry with me, Alice?" said he, falteringly.

"I certainly am not pleased," said she, coldly. "There was a time I had not to press a wish—I had but to utter it."

"And yet, Alice," said he, leaning over, and whispering so close that she felt his breath on her face—"and yet I never loved you then as I love you now."

"You have determined that I should not repeat my invitation," said she, leaning back in the carriage; "I must—I have no help for it—I must say Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," said he, pressing her hand, from which he had just drawn off the glove, to his lips. She never made any effort to withdraw it, but leaned forward as though to conceal the action from her companion.

"Good-bye, dearest Alice," said he once more.

"Give me my glove, Tony. I think it has fallen," said she, carelessly, as she leaned back once more.

"There it is," muttered he; "but I have another here that I will never part with;" and he drew forth the glove she had thrown on the strand for him to pick up—so long ago!

"You will see papa, Tony?" said she, drawing down her veil; "you can't fail to meet him before night. Say you saw us. Good-bye."

And Tony stood alone on the mountain, and watched the cloud of dust that rose behind the carriage, and listened to the heavy tramp of the horses till the sounds died off in the distance.

"Oh, if I could trust the whisper at my heart!" cried he. "If I could—if I could—I'd be happier than I ever dared to hope for."

CHAPTER L.

THE SOLDIER OF MISFORTUNE.

The little flicker of hope—faint enough it was—that cheered up Tony's heart, served also to indispose him to meet with Lady Lyle; for he remembered, fresh as though it had been the day before, the sharp lesson that lady had read him on the "absurd pretensions of certain young gentlemen with respect to those immeasurably above them in station." "I am not in a humour to listen to the second part of the homily, which certainly would not be the less pointed, seeing that I am a wayfarer on foot, and with my knapsack strapped behind me." It gave him no sense of shame that Alice should have seen him thus poor and humble. He never blushed for his pack or his hobnailed shoes. If *she* could not think of him apart from the accidents of his condition, it mattered very little what he wore or how he journeyed. And as he cheered himself with these thoughts he gained a high peak, from which he could see the pine-clad promontory of Sestri, some thousand feet down below him. He knew the spot from description, and remembered that it was to be one of his resting-places for a night. It was no new thing for Tony to strike out his own line across country—his was a practised eye—to mark the course by which a certain point was to be reached, and to know, by something like instinct, where a ravine—where a river must lie—where the mountain-side would descend too precipitously for human footsteps—where the shelving decline would admit of a path—all these were his; and in their exercise he had that sort of pride a man feels in what he deems a gift.

This same pride and his hope together lightened the way, and he went forward almost happy; so that once or twice he half asked himself if fortune was not about to turn on him with a kindlier look than she had yet bestowed? When about a mile from the high road, a dull rumbling sound, like far-away thunder, caught his ear: he looked up, and saw the great massive carriage of the wealthy Sir Arthur rolling ponderously

along, with its six horses, and followed by a dense "wake" of dust for half a mile behind. "I am glad that we have not met," muttered he: "I could have wished to see Bella, and speak to her. She was ever my fast friend; but that haughty old woman, in the midst of all the pride of her wealth, would have jarred on me so far that I might have forgotten myself. Why should my poverty provoke *her* to slight me? My poverty is mine, just as much as any malady that might befall me, and whose sufferings I must bear as I may, and cannot ask another to endure for me. It may try *me* to stand up against, but surely it is no burden to her; and why make it seem as a gulf between us?" Ah, Master Tony! subtler heads than yours have failed to untie this knot. It was dusk when he reached Sestri, and found himself in the little vine-clad porch of the "Angelo d'Oro," a modest little inn for foot-travellers on the verge of the sea. He ordered his supper to be served in the open air, under the fresh foliage, and with the pleasant night-wind gently stirring the leaves.

As the landlord arranged the table, he informed Tony that another traveller had come a short time before, but so ignorant of the language was he, that he was only served by means of signs; and he seemed so poor too, that they had scruples about giving him a bed, and were disposed to let him pass the night under the porch.

Tony learned that the traveller had only tasted a glass of wine and a piece of bread, and then, as if overcome by fatigue and exhaustion, dropped off asleep. "I will see him," said he, rising, without partaking of the soup that was just placed before him; "the poor fellow may perhaps be ill." The landlord led the way to the end of the house, where, on a heap of chestnut leaves, the usual bedding of the cattle in these regions, a large strongly-built man, poorly clad and travel-stained, lay sound asleep. Tony took the lantern and held it to his face. How was it he knew the features? He knew them, and yet not the man. He was sure that the great massive brow and that large strong cheek were not seen by him for the first time, and though he was sorry to disturb the poor fellow's slumber, he could not control his impatience to resolve the doubt; and, stooping down, he shook him gently by the shoulder.

"What is it?" cried the man, starting up to a sitting posture; "what is it now?"

"You are a countryman of mine," said Tony, "and I'm trying to think if we have not met before."

The man rose to his feet, and, taking the lantern from Tony's

"Tony took the lantern and held it to his face."

hand, held it up to his face. "Don't you know me, sir," cried he; "don't you remember me?"

"I do, and I do not," muttered Tony, still puzzled.

"Don't you mind the day, sir, that you was near been run over in London, and a man pulled you out just as the horses was on top o' you?"

"And are you the man? Are you the poor fellow whose bundle I carried off?"—but he stopped, and grasping the man's hand, shook it cordially and affectionately. "By what chance do I find you here?"

The man looked about, as if to see that he was not overheard; and Tony, marking the caution of the gesture, said, "None can understand us here. Don't be afraid to say what you like; but first of all come and share my supper with me."

It was not without a modest reluctance that the poor fellow took his seat at the table; and indeed for some time, so overcome was he by the honour accorded him, that he scarcely ate at all. If Tony Butler was no finished conversationalist, able to lead the talk of a dinner-table, yet in the tact that pertains to making intercourse with an inferior easy and familiar he had not many his equal; and before the meal was finished, he slapped him familiarly on the shoulder, and said, "Rory Quin, here's your health, and a long life to you!"

"How did you know my name, sir?" asked the poor fellow, whose face glowed with delight at the flattery of such a recognition.

"At first I did not trust my memory, Rory, for I wrote it down in a note-book I have; and after a while I learned to think of you so often, and to wish I might meet you, that I had no need of the writing. You don't seem to remember that I am in your debt, my good fellow. I carried off your bundle, and, what was worse, it fell overboard and was lost."

"It couldn't have any but bad-luck," said Rory, thoughtfully; "and maybe it was just the best thing could happen it."

There was a touch of sorrow in what he said that Tony easily saw; a hidden grief had been removed, and after a little inducement he led him on to tell his story; and which, though, narrated in Rory's own words, it occupied hours, may, happily for my readers, be condensed into a very few sentences.

Rory had been induced, partly by the glorious cause itself, partly through the glittering promises of personal advancement, to enlist for foreign service. A certain Major M'Caskey—a man that, as Rory said, would wile the birds off the trees—came down to the little village he lived in at the foot of the Galtee

Mountains; and there was not one, young or old, was not ready to follow him. To hear him talk, as Rory described, was better than a play. There wasn't a part of the world he hadn't seen, there wasn't a great man in it he didn't know; and "what beat all," as Rory said, "was the way he had the women on his side." Not that he was a fine-looking man, or tall, or handsome—far from it; he was a little "crith of a crayture," not above five feet four or five, and with red whiskers and a beard, and a pair of eyes that seemed on fire; and he had a way of looking about him as he went, as much as to say, "Where's the man that wants to quarrel with me? for I'm ready and willin'."

"I won't say," added Rory, with a touch of humility, "that one like your honour would have thought so much of him as we did. I won't say that all the fine people he knew, and all the wonderful things he did, would have made your honour admire him, as I, and others like me, did. Maybe, indeed, you'd have found out it was lies from beginning to end."

"I'm not so sure of that," muttered Tony; "there are plausible fellows of that sort that take in men of the world every day!" And Tony sat back in his chair and puffed his cigar in silence, doubtless recalling one such adept in his own experience.

"Faix, I'm proud to hear your honour say that!" cried Rory. "I'm as glad as a pound-note to know that even a gentleman might have been 'taken in' by the Major."

"I'll not go that far, perhaps," remarked Tony, "as regards your Major; but I repeat that there are certain fellows of his kind who actually *have* imposed on gentlemen—yes, on gentlemen who were no fools either. But how was it he tricked you?"

Now were the flood-gates of Rory's eloquence thrown open, and for above an hour did he revel, as only an Irishman or an Italian can, in a narrative of cruel wrongs and unmerited hardships; sufferings on land and sufferings at sea; short rations, bad language, and no pay. Rory was to have been an officer—a captain at least; and when they landed at Ancona, he was marched away hundreds of miles, with a heavy musket and a heavier pack, as a common soldier, and given nothing but beans and oil for his food, and told he'd be shot if he grumbled. But what he felt most of all was, that he never knew whose service he was in, and what he was going to fight for. Now it was the Holy Father—Rory was ready to die for him and the Blessed Virgin; now it was the King of Naples and Saint Somebody,

whose name he couldn't remember, and that Rory felt no enthusiasm for. At one moment he was told the Pope was going to bless the whole battalion, and sprinkle them with his own hand; and then it was the Queen—and purty she was, no doubt—was to lead them on, God knows where! "And that's the way we were living in the mountains for six weeks, and every time they paraded us—about once a-week—there would be thirty or forty less of us; some gone off to be sailors, some taking to the highway as robbers, and a few selling whatever they had and making for home. At last the Major himself came down to inspect us—he was colonel then, and covered with gold, and all over stars and crosses. We were drawn up in a square of a little town they call Loretto, that has houses on three sides of it, and a low seawall with a drop of about twenty feet to the sea. I'll not forget the place to my dying day.

"There was four hundred and twenty-seven of us out of two thousand and sixty—the rest ran away; and when the Major heard the roll called, I thought he'd go out of his mind; and he walked up and down in front of us, gnashing his teeth and blaspheming as never I heard before. 'Ye scoundrels,' he said at last, 'you've disgraced me eternally, and I'll go back to the Holy Father and tell him it's curses and not blessings he'd have to give you.'

"This was too much to bear, and I cried out, 'You'd better not!"

"Who says that?' cries he. 'Where's the cowardly rascal that hasn't the courage to step forward and repeat these words?' and with that I advanced two paces, and putting my gun to my shoulder, took a steady aim at him. I had him covered. If I pulled the trigger he was a dead man; but I couldn't do it—no, if I got the whole world for it, I couldn't; and do you know why?—here it is, then: It was the way he stood up, bould and straight, with one hand on his breast and the other on the hilt of his sword, and he cried out, 'Fire! you scoundrel, fire!' Bad luck to me if I could; but I walked on, covering him all the while, till I got within ten paces of the wall, and then I threw down my musket, and with a run I cleared it, and jumped into the sea. He fired both his pistols at me, and one ball grazed my head; but I dived and swam and dived till he lost sight of me; and it was half an hour before they got out a boat, and before that I was snug hiding between the rocks, and so close to him that I could hear him swearing away like mad. When it was dark I crept out, and made my way along the shore to Pesaro, and all the way here. Indeed, I had only to say any-

where I was a deserter, and every one was kind to me. And do you know, sir, now that it's all over, I'm glad I didn't shoot him in cold blood?"

"Of course you are," said Tony, half sternly.

"But if I am," rejoined the other—"if I am glad of it, it's a'most breaking my heart to think I'm going back to Ireland without a chance of facing him in a fair fight."

"You could do that too if you were so very anxious for it," said Tony, gravely.

"Do you tell me so? And how, sir?"

"Easy enough, Rory. I'm on my way now to join a set of brave fellows that are going to fight the very soldiers your Major will be serving with. The cause that he fights for, I need not tell you, can't be a very good one."

"Indeed, it oughtn't," said Rory, cautiously.

"Come along with me, then; if it's only fighting you ask for, there's a fellow to lead us on that never baulked any one's fancy that way. In four days from this we can be in the thick of it. I don't want to persuade you in a hurry, Rory. Take a day—take two—three days, if you like, to think of it."

"I won't take three minutes. I'll follow your honour to the world's end! and if it gives me a chance to come up with the Major, I'll bless the hour I met you."

Tony now told him—somewhat more ambiguously, I'm afraid, than consisted with perfect candour—of the cause they were going to fight for. He made the most of those magical words so powerful to the Celtic heart—oppression, cruelty, injustice; he imparted a touch of repeal to the struggle before them; and when once pressed hard by Rory with the home question, "Which side is the Holy Father?" he roughly answered, "I don't think he has much to say to it one way or other."

"Faix, I'm ashamed of myself," said Rory, flushing up; "and I ought to know that what's good enough for your honour to fight for, is too good for me."

They drained the last glasses of their flask in pledge of their compact, and, resolving to keep their resting-time for the sultry heat of the day, started by the clear starlight for Genoa.

CHAPTER LI.

A PIECE OF GOOD TIDINGS.

It was about a week after this event when Sam M'Gruder received a few lines from Tony Butler, saying that he was to sail that morning with a detachment for Garibaldi. They were bound for Marsala, and only hoped that they might not be caught by the Neapolitan cruisers, which were said to swarm along the coast. "I suppose," he writes, "there's plenty of 'fight' amongst us; but we are more picturesque than decent-looking; and an honest countryman of mine, who has attached himself to my fortunes, tells me in confidence that 'they're all heathens, every man of them.' They are certainly a wild, dare-devil set, whom it will be difficult to reduce to any discipline, and, I should fear, impossible to restrain from outrage if occasion offers. We are so crowded that we have only standing-room on deck, and those below are from time to time relieved in squads, to come up and breathe a little fresh air. The suffering from heat and thirst was bad yesterday, but will perhaps be less at sea, with a fresh breeze to cool us. At all events no one complains. We are the jolliest blackguards in the world, and going to be killed in a better humour with life than half the fine gentlemen feel as they wake in the morning to a day of pleasure.

"I shall be glad when we put foot on land again; for I own I'd rather fight the Neapolitans than live on in such close companionship with my gallant comrades. If not 'bowled over. I'll write to you within a week or two. Don't forget me.—Yours ever,

"Tony Butler."

M'Gruder was carefully plodding his way through this not very legible document, exploring it with a zeal that vouched for his regard for the writer, when he was informed that an English gentleman was in the office inquiring for Mr. Butler.

The stranger soon presented himself as a Mr. Culter, of the house of Box & Culter, solicitors, London, and related that he

had been in search of Mr. Anthony Butler from one end of Europe to the other. "I was first of all, sir," said he, "in the wilds of Calabria, and thence I was sent off to the equally barbarous north of Ireland, where I learned that I must retrace my steps over the Alps to your house; and now I am told that Mr. Butler has left this a week ago."

"Your business must have been important to require such activity," said M'Gruder, half inquiringly.

"Very important indeed for Mr. Butler, if I could only meet with him. Can you give any hint, sir, how that is to be accomplished?"

"I scarcely think you'll follow him when I tell you where he has gone," said M'Gruder, dryly. "He has gone to join Garibaldi."

"To join Garibaldi!" exclaimed the other. "A man with a landed estate and thirty-six thousand in the Three per Cents gone off to Garibaldi!"

"It is clear we are not talking of the same person. My poor friend had none of that wealth you speak of."

"Probably not, sir, when last you saw him; but his uncle, Sir Omerod Butler, has died, leaving him all he had in the world."

"I never knew he had an uncle. I never heard him speak of a rich relation."

"There was some family quarrel—some estrangement, I don't know what; but when Sir Omerod sent for me to add a codicil to his will, he expressed a great wish to see his nephew before he died, and sent me off to Ireland to fetch him to him; but a relapse of his malady occurred the day after I left him, and he died within a week."

The man of law entered into a minute description of the property to which Tony was to succeed. There was a small family estate in Ireland, and a large one in England; there was a considerable funded fortune, and some scattered moneys in foreign securities; the whole only charged with eight hundred a-year on the life of a lady no longer young, whom scandal called not the widow of Sir Omerod Butler. M'Gruder paid little attention to these details; his whole thought was how to apprize Tony of his good-luck—how call him back to a world where he had what would make life most enjoyable. "I take it, sir," asked he, at last, "that you don't fancy a tour in Sicily?"

"Nothing is less in my thoughts, sir. We shall be most proud to act as Mr. Butler's agents, but I'm not prepared to expose my life for the agency."

"Then I think I must go myself. It's clear the poor fellow ought to know of his good fortune."

"I suspect that the Countess Brancaleone, the annuitant I mentioned, will not send to tell him," said the lawyer, smiling; "for if Mr. Butler should get knocked over in this ugly business, she inherits everything, even to the family plate with the Butler arms."

"She shan't, if I can help it," said M'Gruder, firmly. "I'll set out to-night."

Mr. Culter passed a warm eulogium on this heroic devotion, enlarged on the beauty of friendship in general, and concluded by saying he would step over to his hotel, where he had ordered dinner; after which he would certainly drink Mr. M'Gruder's health.

"I shall want some details from you," said M'Gruder—"something written and formal—to assure my friend that my tidings are trustworthy. I know it will be no easy task to persuade him that he is a man of fortune."

"You shall have all you require, sir—a copy of the will, a formal letter from our house, reciting details of the property, and, what will, perhaps, impart the speediest conviction of all, a letter of credit, in Mr. Butler's favour, for five hundred pounds for immediate use. These are the sort of proofs that no scepticism is strong enough to resist. The only thing that never jests, whose seriousness is above all levity, is money;" and so M'Gruder at once acknowledged that when he could go fortified with such testimonies, he defied all doubt.

His preparations for departure were soon made. A short letter to his brother explained the cause of his sudden leaving; a longer one to Dolly told how, in his love for her, he could not do enough for her friend; and that, though he liked Tony well for his own sake, he liked him far more as the "adopted brother and old playfellow of his dearest Dolly." Poor fellow! he wrote this from a full heart, and a very honest one too. Whether it imparted all the pleasure he hoped it might to her who read it, is none of our province to tell. It is only ours to record that he started that night for Genoa, obtained from a friend—a subordinate in the Government employment—a letter to Garibaldi himself, and sailed with an agent of the General's in charge of a supply of small-arms and ammunition.

They were within thirty miles of Sicily when they were boarded by the Neapolitan corvette the *Veloce*, and carried off prisoners to Palermo—the one solitary capture the royal navy made in the whole of that eventful struggle.

The proofs that they were Garibaldians were too strong and many for denial; and for a day and a half their fate was far from hopeful. Indeed, had the tidings of the first encounters between the King's forces and the buccaneer's been less disastrous than they were, the prisoners would have been shot; but already a half doubt had arisen as to the fidelity of the royal troops. This and that general, it was rumoured, had resigned; and of those who remained, it was said, more than one had counselled "concessions." Ominous word at such a moment, but the presage of something darker and more ominous still.

M'Gruder bore up with a stout heart, and nothing grieved him in all his calamity more than the thought that all this time Tony might be exposing his life as worthless and hopeless, while, if he only knew it, he had already succeeded to what men are content to pass their whole existence to grasp and gain.

Nor was he inactive in his imprisonment. He wrote letters to Garibaldi, enclosing others to Tony; he wrote to all the consuls he could think of; to the Minister at Naples, or to his representative; and he proclaimed his right as a "civis Romanus," and threatened a Palmerstonian vengeance on all and every that had a hand in curtailing his freedom.

In this very natural and British pursuit we must now leave him, and betake ourselves to other cares and other characters.

CHAPTER LII.

ON THE CHIAJA AT NIGHT.

The night had just closed in after a hot sultry day of autumn in Naples, as Maitland and Caffarelli sat on the sea-wall of the Chiaja, smoking their cigars in silence, apparently deep in thought, or sometimes startled by the distant shouts and cries of the populace who crammed the Toledo or the Quarter of St. Lucia; for all Naples was now in the streets, and wild songs and yells resounded on every side.

In the bay the fleet lay at anchor, but the rapid flash of lanterns, as they rose and fell in the riggings, showed that the signalman was at work, and that messages were being transmitted and replied to throughout the squadron. A like activity seemed to prevail in the forts above the city, and the roll of the drum and the bugle-call occasionally could be heard overtopping all other sounds.

"What would a newly-come traveller say to all this?" said Caffarelli at last. "Would he think it was a city about to be attacked by an enemy, or would he deem it a town in open revolt, or one given up to pillage after the assault? I have seen to-night what might confirm any of these impressions."

"And all three are present," said Maitland, moodily. "Your traveller could scarcely be more puzzled than we are."

The other sighed wearily, and Maitland went on. "What do you trust, or whom? Is it those noisy legions up there, who only muster to disband; or that gallant fleet that has come to anchor, only the more easily to surrender and change its flag?"

"There may be some traitors, but the great majority, I'll swear, will stand by the King."

"No; not one in fifty—not one in a hundred. You don't seem to apprehend that loyalty is not a sudden instinct. It is a thing a man inherits. Take my word for it, Carlo, these men will not fight to keep a certain set of priests around a bigoted old Queen, or support a King whose highest ambition is to be a Jesuit."

"And if you thought so meanly of the cause, why have you adopted it?"

"Because, ill as I think of the Court, I hate the rabble more. Remember, Carlo"—and now he spoke in a rapid and marked tone—"remember that, when I joined you, I deemed myself a rich man, and I had my ambitions, like the rest of you. Had I known what I now know—had I foreseen that the day was so near wherein I was to find myself a beggar——"

"No, no, Maitland; don't say this."

"And why not say it? It is true. You know as well as I do that amongst that yelling rabble there is none poorer than myself; and for this reason, I repeat, I might have chosen my associates more wisely. You yourself saw the treatment I met with this morning."

"Ay, but bear in mind, Maitland, what was the provocation you gave. It is no small thing to tell a King, surrounded by his ministers and generals, that he has not one loyal and true man in his train—that, what between treachery and cowardice, he will find himself alone, at the head of a few foreign regiments, who will only fight to cut their way through towards home."

"I scarcely went so far as this," said Maitland, smiling.

"Did you not, *per Bacco!* I was there and heard you. You accused Laguila to his face of being bought, and named the sum; and you told Cadorno that you had a copy of his letter promising to surrender the flag-ship to Garibaldi."

"And they listened to me with an admirable patience."

"I don't know that; I am certain Cadorno will send you a message before the week is over."

"And why not before the day was over? Are these accusations a man sleeps upon?"

"The King commanded them both to reply to your charges formally and distinctly, but not with the sword; and he was right so far."

"At all events, was it kingly to tell me of the favours that had been bestowed upon me, and to remind me that I was an alien, and unknown?"

"The King was angry."

"He was angrier when I handed him back his patent, and told him that I did not care to be the last made noble of a dynasty.

"It was outrageous. I was shocked to hear you; and for one so young, I was struck with the dignity with which he heard you."

"I don't think he understood me: he was impassive because

he did not know he was wounded. But why do I talk of these things? they have no longer the faintest interest for me. Except yourself, there is not a man in the cause I care for."

"This is a mere passing depression, my dear Maitland. All things seem sad-coloured to you now. Wait till to-morrow, or wait till there be a moment of danger, and you will be yourself again."

"As for that," said Maitland, bitterly, "I am terribly myself just now. The last eight or ten years of my life were the dream; now is the awakenment. But cheer up, my old friend I will stand by *you*, though I care very little for the cause you fight for. I will still serve on the Staff, and play out my part to the fall of the curtain."

"What a strange scene that council was this morning!" said Caffarelli, half wishing to draw him from the personal theme.

"What a strange thing to call a council, where not merely men walked in and out unbidden, but where a chance traveller could sit down amongst the King's advisers, and give his opinion like a servant of the crown! Do you even know his name?"

"I'm not sure that I do; but it sounded like Tchernicheff. He distinguished himself against the Turks on the Danube."

"And because he routed some ill-disciplined hordes with others a mere shade more civilized, he comes here to impose his opinion on our councils, and tell us how we are to defend ourselves!"

"I did not hear him utter a word."

"No, but he handed in a paper drawn up by himself, in which he recommends the King to withdraw all the forces in front of Capua, and meet these marauders, where they will less like to fight, in the open. The advice was good—even though it came from a barbarian. In street-fighting your buccaneer is as good as, if not better than, a regular. All the circumstances of the ground favour him. Take him, however, where he must move and manœuvre—where he will have to form and re-form—to dress his line under fire, and occasionally change his flank—then all the odds will be against him. So far the Scythian spoke well. His only miscalculation was to suppose that we will fight anywhere."

"I declare, Maitland, I shall lose temper with you. You can't surely know what insulting things you say."

"I wish they could provoke any other than yourself, *mio caro*. But come away from this. Let us walk back again. I want to have one more look at those windows before I go."

"And are you really in love?" asked the other with more of astonishment in his voice than curiosity.

"I wish I knew how to make *her* believe it—that's all," said he, sadly; and, drawing his arm within his friend's, moved on with bent-down head, and in silence.

"I think your friends are about the only travellers in Naples at this moment, and indeed none but English would come here at such a season. The dog-days and the revolution together ought to be too much even for tourist curiosity."

Caffarelli went on to describe the arrival of the three heavy-laden carriages with their ponderous baggage and their crowd of servants, and the astonishment of the landlord at such an apparition; but Maitland paid him no attention—perhaps did not even hear him.

Twice or thrice Caffarelli said something to arouse notice or attract curiosity, even to pique irritability, as when he said—"I suppose I must have seen your beauty, for I saw two—and both good-looking—but neither such as would drive a man distracted out of pure admiration. Are you minding me? Are you listening to me?"

"No, I have not heard one word you were saying."

"Civil, certainly; but, seriously, Maitland, is there not something more pressing to do at this moment than to loiter along the Chiaja to catch a glimpse of the closed curtains within which some blonde angel may be taking her tea?"

"Go home, and I will join you later on. I have given orders about the horses. My man will have all in readiness by daybreak. You seem to me most terribly eager to have your head smashed. The King ought to reward your valour. It will be the only 'Cross' he will have to bestow."

Caffarelli turned impatiently from him, and walked away.

Maitland looked after him for a moment and then continued his way. He sauntered on, rather like one seeking to kill time than to reach a goal, and once or twice he stopped, and seemed to reflect whether he would go on. At last he reached a spot where a broad path of light streamed across the street, and extended till it was lost in the thick foliage of the garden on the seaside, and, looking suddenly up, he saw he was it front of the great hotel of Naples, "L'Universo." The drawing-room windows were open on a long balcony, and Maitland could see in the well-lighted room certain figures which he persuaded himself he could recognize even through the muslin curtains, which slightly moved and waved in the faint night-air. As he still strained his eyes to mark the scene, two figures approached the window, and passed out upon the balcony. There could be no mistake—they were Alice and her sister; and so perfect was the

stillness of the air, and so thin withal, that he could hear the sound of their voices, though not trace their words.

"Is it not delicious here, Alice?" said Bella. "These are the glorious nights of Italy Maitland used to tell us of—so calm, so balmy, and so starry."

"What was that Skeffy was saying to you about Maitland as you came up stairs?" asked Alice, sharply.

"Oh, it was a rumour he mentioned that Maitland had quarrelled with the Court party. He had advised something, or rejected something; in fact, I paid little attention, for I know nothing of these Italian plots and schemes, and I like Maitland much better when he does not speak of them."

"Is he here now, do you know?"

"Yes; Skeff said he saw him this morning."

"I hope and pray he may not hear that we have arrived. I trust that we may not see him."

"And why so, Alice, dearest?"

"Can you ask me?"

"I mean, why not receive him on the terms of an easy intimacy? A person of his tact is always quick enough to appreciate the exact amount of favour he is held in."

"It is of myself I am thinking—not of him," said she, with something of resentment in her tone.

"If you speak this way, Alice, I shall believe that you care for him."

"The greater mistake yours, my dear Bella."

"Well—that you did once care for him, and regret the fact, or regret the change—which is it?"

"Neither, on my honour! He interested me—I own to that; but now that I know his mystery, and what a vulgar mystery it is, I am half ashamed that I even felt an interest in him."

"Gossip would say you did more, Alice—that you gave him encouragement."

"What an odious word you have impressed into your service! but I deny it; nor was he one to want it. Your adventurer never does."

"Adventurer!"

"I mean it in its least offensive sense; but really I see no reason why this man's name is to persecute me. I left Ireland half to avoid it. I certainly need not encounter it here."

"And if you meet him?"

"I shall not meet him. I don't intend to go out so long as we are here, and I trust I can refuse to receive him when at home."

"I had almost said, Poor fellow!"

"Say it by all means; compassionate—console him too, if Skeff has no objection."

"Oh, Alice!"

"Your own fault, Bella, if I say provoking things. No, mamma," added she, to some remark from within; "our secrets, as you call them, cannot be overheard; for, first of all, we are talking English; and secondly, there is no person whatever in the street."

Lady Lyle now made her appearance on the balcony, and soon afterwards they all re-entered the room. Maitland sat hours long on the stone bench, watching with intense eagerness as a shadow would pass or repass behind the curtains, and there he remained till all the lights were out in the hotel and the whole house sunk in silence.

CHAPTER LIII.

UNPLEASANT RECKONINGS.

There were few busier diplomatists in Europe during these eventful days of Naples than Skeffington Damer; and if England had not her share of influence, it was no fault of his. He sent off special messengers every day. He wrote to F. O. in a cipher, of which it was said no one had the key; and he telegraphed in mystical language to the Admiral at Malta, which went far to persuade the gallant seaman that his correspondent was a maniac. He besieged the Court and the ministerial offices, and went home to receive deputations from the wildest leaders of the extreme democracy. He was determined, as he said, to "know the truth," and he surrounded himself for that purpose with a mass of inextricable perfidy and falsehood; and yet, with all these occupations, he passed his entire mornings with the Lyles, and dined with them every day.

It was a great pleasure, as Sir Arthur said, to be "behind the scenes;" and really the phrase did not ill represent their position, for they knew as much of what was going on upon the stage as people usually do who have only an occasional glimpse, and that from a wrong point of view. Sir Arthur, however, believed Skeffy to be the rising diplomatist, the embryo Talleyrand of Great Britain; and it was strange to see an old, crafty, case-hardened man of the world listening with implicit trustfulness to the hare-brained speculations of a young fellow, whose solitary pretensions were, that he sent off his daily balderdash marked "On Her Majesty's Service," and sealed with the royal arms.

Lady Lyle only half believed in him; and as for Alice, she laughed at, but liked him; while Bella gave him all her confidence, and admired him greatly. And a very nice thing it is of young ladies, and never to be too much commended, how they will hang on the words, and store up the sayings, and repeat the opinions of the man who prefers them. It is not exactly Love, no more than gooseberry wine is champagne, but it effervesces

and exhilarates, and I'm not sure if it does not agree very well with weak constitutions.

Now Skeffy told Bella every morning in the most mysterious manner how he had checkmated Bresson, the French Minister, and outwitted Caraffa and the Cardinal Riario. They never could make out whence he had his information. The Queen had spent a fortune in paying spies to watch him, but he outmanœuvred them all. Nobody knew—nobody ever could know—the resources of his craft; and indeed, except Louis Napoleon, there was not a man in Europe had fathomed the depth of his astuteness. "I have to pretend," would he say, "to be a light, flippant, volatile creature, given up to pleasure, fond of play, of the ballet, and all that sort of thing. I let them hear every day of the sums I have lost at lansquenet, and the enormous extravagance of my daily life, but they don't know what goes on here," and he would tap his forehead; "they never suspect what plots and plans and machinations are at work within that brain they imagine to be abandoned to enjoyment. It will come out one of these days, dearest Bella; they'll know who 'did it' yet." And this was a very favourite phrase with him, and Bella caught it up, and talked of the people who had not "done it," and never could "do it," and hinted at one whom an ignorant world would awake one morning to see had "done it," and "done it" to perfection.

To hear him talk, you would say that he rather liked the mistaken estimate the world had formed of him; that it was one of those excellent jokes whose point lay in a surprise; and what a surprise would that be one of these days when he came forth in his true character, the great political genius of Europe! Bella believed it all; not that she was deficient in common sense, or wanting in discernment; but she liked him—there was the secret. She had made her investment in a certain stock, and would persist in regarding it as a most profitable venture; and thus would they pass their mornings—a strange way to make love, perhaps; but that passion, etherealise it how you may, trades on some one form or other of selfishness; and all these endearments were blended with the thought of how happy they should be when they were great people.

Skeffy would bring with him besides, a whole bagful of papers, despatches, and "private and confidentials," and suchlike, and make Bella copy out pages for him of that dreary trash, which, like a bad tapestry, has served no other purpose that to employ the small mind that devised it. And he would sit there, with his eyes closed, and dictate to her endless "brief

glances" at the present aspect of the Italian question, till the poor girl was half worn out between the importance of her task and its weariness.

"What's that you are poring over, Bella?" he asked, as she read over a somewhat lengthy letter.

"It is the complaint of an Englishman at being detained by the authorities, first at Palermo and again here: he was a mere traveller, he asserts, and not in any way engaged in political schemes. He says that this is his fourth appeal to you without an answer, and he declares that if this be not replied to, he will address the Chief Secretary at home."

"Tell the fellow that a Damer is inaccessible to a menace; tell him that his stupid letter would be promptly referred back to me; and say that, so far as this peninsula is concerned, I am F. O., and to be propitiated by humility, and not outraged by a threat."

"But if it be really true—if the poor fellow should be imprisoned for nothing, Skeff?"

"If so, I shall liberate him;" and as he spoke he arose and walked the room with a haughty stride and a head erect. "Write—

"'Sir,—I am directed by H.M.'s Chargé d'Affaires'—or rather say 'The undersigned has to acknowledge the receipt of'—what's his name?"

"Samuel M'Gruder."

"What a name!—'of Samuel M'Gruder's letter; and although he takes exception to the passages marked A and B, and requires explanation of the paragraph C, beginning at the words 'nor can I,' and ending at "British subject"'—— You'll have to copy out the whole of this despatch, Bella, and then I shall mark the passages—where was I?"

"'British subject.'"

"Yes, I remember. 'Yet that, conceding much to the feelings'—no, that is too familiar—'making allowances for an irritability——'"

"I don't think you can say that, Skeff. He has now been seven weeks in confinement."

"Lucky dog that he has not been seven weeks worked almost to a skeleton, like me, with the cares of a whole nation on my head, and the eyes of Europe upon me."

"Just let me say that you will look into his case, and do your best to get him out of prison."

"With all my heart. It is fearfully undignified; but let it go, and I'll send off a messenger to the Prefetto Lanzi to deliver

up the prisoner M'Gruder to me to-morrow morning, and we will interrogate him here."

The roll of a drum was now heard in the street without, and from the balcony could be seen an immense crowd of people moving in front of an infantry regiment, who marched past, travel-stained and disordered, and with an indescribable something in their air that indicated, it might be defeat, it might be disaffection.

"Here's strange news," said Sir Arthur, as he joined them. "The landlord tells me Garibaldi has landed in Calabria, near Reggio, beaten the royal troops, and is in full march on Naples. The regiment that you see there were ordered off to reinforce the advanced guard, but cried out 'Viva Garibaldi!' and have been now recalled, and are to be sent into the fortress."

"Look!" cried Skeff; "here comes the Artillery after them, a strong proof that they don't trust these fellows. Bella, I must write off the news at once."

"Let me first finish about M'Gruder," said she, as she sat down to the table.

"I wish we were all safe back in England," said Lady Lyle, as she came up.

"I was just thinking the very same thing," said Sir Arthur.

"Have no fears," interposed Skeffy; "I shall order up the fleet from Malta. You shall have a frigate—a line-of-battle ship, if you like it better."

"I'd much rather we had post-horses and an escort," said Lady Lyle.

"Would that be possible, Damer?"

"All is possible, Sir Arthur, to power properly exercised. I'll go down at once to the War-office and see what can be done."

"If it were perfectly safe," said Bella, "I should like to drive through the streets and see what is going on; and as Alice refuses to go out, we are just enough for one carriage." The project was agreed to, all the more readily that Skeff assured them his presence was an ægis that all parties would know how to respect: he was, in fact, as he put it, a sort of emblematised British lion, who, with folded paws, was about to take an airing for his own amusement.

"As we drive along," whispered he to Bella, "just watch the recognitions fellows will throw me—a look, a gesture, a sign, scarcely perceptible, but enough to say, 'Your Excellency may depend upon us.'"

And Bella felt a certain elation at the thought that she was

the chosen one of a man so eminent and so distinguished. And, oh dear, let us not be severe upon her for it! If we could not make occasional swans of our geese in this life, we should be very ill off in matters of ornithology. Away they drove down the Chiaja and up the Toledo, where, amidst wild yells and cries for the King, and at times for Garibaldi, a dense mass of people surged and swayed like a mighty monster awaking out of slumber and arousing to deeds of violence.

The populace seemed intoxicated, but not with wine or with joy, but a sort of dare-devil recklessness which sought something—anything—to vent its passion upon. Lines of men linked arm in arm, and filling the full breadth of the street, marched rapidly on, chanting wild songs; and it was strange to mark in these the old grey-headed feeble man coupled with the stalwart youth, or perhaps the mere boy. Here and there were groups listening to some street-orator, now greeting his words with a cheer, now with a burst of vociferous laughter; and through all these went other men, busily, eagerly whispering to this, conferring with that, now exerting every effort of persuasiveness, now seeming to employ incentives to vengeance.

Except the carriage where sat the Lyles, not another vehicle of any kind was to be seen; and as the horses moved slowly along through the dense crowd, many a rude jest and droll comment was passed upon the *matti Inglesi*—the mad English—who had taken such a time and place for a carriage airing. Nor was the courage of the act unrecognized, and twice or thrice a wild cheer proclaimed what they thought of a nation whose very ladies were above all fear and timidity.

The most striking feature in all this tumult was, that soldiers were seen everywhere mixed up with the civilians; not merely furloughed men in undress, but soldiers in full uniform and perfectly armed, but yet displaying, sometimes ostentatiously, by the way they carried their shakoes or their bayonets, or wore their coats open and unbuttoned, that they no longer respected the claims of discipline.

Patrols on foot or horseback would be met, too; but the men, under no restraint, would not only exchange words of greeting with the mob, but accept offers of wine or cigars; and it was seen that the officers were either powerless to prevent or unwilling to curb this indiscipline.

"What does all this portend, Damer?" asked Sir Arthur. "We hear cheers for the King; but all I see seems to threaten his downfall."

Skeffy was puzzled, and a wiser man might have been puzzled;

but his diplomatic instincts forbade such a humiliating avowal, and so he merely muttered something to the purport, that "We" had not fully determined what was to be the issue; and that till "We" had made up our minds, all these signs and portents were mere street-noises.

If I am not perfectly just to him in this rendering of his explanation, I am at least merciful to my reader; and, leaving the party to follow out the exploration, I shall return to the drawing-room they had just quitted, and where Alice now sat alone, and deep in thought. The yells and cries that filled the street outside, and the continual uproar that resounded through the city, were all unheeded by her; and so immersed was she in her reflection, that when a servant entered the room to present the card of a visitor, she was unaware of his presence till he had twice addressed her.

"It cannot be for us," said she, looking at the name. "I do not know the Count d'Amalfi."

"He hopes to be better remembered as Mr. Maitland," said that gentleman, as pushing wide the half-opened door, he approached her and made a low bow.

The servant had time to retire and shut the door before Alice had sufficiently recovered herself to ask Maitland to be seated. So coldly was the request conveyed, however, that if he was not determined on having an interview, he would have affected to make his call an offer of some sort of attention, and taken his leave almost on the instant. Far different were his present intentions; and as he deposited his hat and cane, and took his place in front of her, there was a methodical slowness that indicated purpose.

"I am almost afraid to tell you, Mr. Maitland," she began, "that I gave orders to be denied to all visitors. They have all gone out to drive, and ——"

"It was for that reason that I took this opportunity to call, madam," said he, very quietly, but in a tone of some decision. "I desired to see you all alone."

"Not, surely, if you were aware that I did not receive?"

"Do not oblige me to convict myself, Mrs. Trafford; for I, too, shall be almost afraid to tell the truth," and a very faint smile moved his mouth as he spoke.

"But, as I conjecture, you would like to meet my father ——"

"My visit at present is for you," said he interrupting; "and as I cannot assure myself how long the opportunity may last, let me profit by it."

She became very pale; some fear she certainly felt: but there

was more of anger than fear in the thought that this man was, by his manner, almost asserting a right to see and speak with her.

"Mr. Maitland is too accomplished a man of the world to need being told that, when a person has declared an indisposition to receive, it is usually deemed enough to secure privacy."

"Usually—yes; but there are occasions which are not in this category."

"And do you mean to say this is one of them, sir?" said she, haughtily.

"Most certainly, madam, this is one of them!" As Maitland said this he saw the colour mount to her face; and he saw, too, how, now that her proud spirit was, as it were, challenged, she would not think of retreat, but brave him, whatever might come of it.

"Indeed!" said she, with a scornful laugh—"indeed!" and the last syllable was drawn out in an accent of most insolent irony.

"Yes, madam," he continued, in a tone perfectly calm and unimpassioned; "our last relations together fully warrant me to say so much; and however presumptuous it might have been in me to aspire as I did, the gracious favour with which I was listened to seemed to plead for me."

"What favour do you speak of, sir?" said she with evident agitation.

"I must not risk the faint hope that remains to me, by recalling what you may not wish to remember; but I may at least ask you to bring to mind a certain evening—a certain night—when we walked together in the garden at Tilney."

"I do not think I am likely to forget it, sir: some anonymous slanderer has made it the pretext of a most insolent calumny. I do not, I need not say, connect you in any way with this base scandal; but it is enough to make the incident the reverse of a pleasant memory."

"And yet it was the happiest of my whole life."

"It is unfortunate, sir, that we should look back to an event with feelings so diametrically opposite."

Maitland gave no heed to the irony of her tone, but went on. "If I was conscious of my own unworthiness, I had certain things in my favour which served to give me courage—not the least of these was your brother's friendship."

"Mark was always proud of being Mr. Maitland's friend," said she, rather touched by this haughty man's humility.

"That friendship became very precious to me when I knew his sister. Indeed from that hour I loved him as a brother."

"Forgive me, sir, if I interrupt you. At the time to which you allude we would seem to have been living in a perfect realm of misconceptions. Surely it is not necessary to revive them: surely, now that we have awoke, we need not take up the clue of a dream to assist our reflections."

"What may be the misconceptions you refer to?" said he, with a voice much shaken and agitated.

"One was, it would appear, that Mr. Maitland made me certain professions. Another, that he was—that he had—that is, that he held——. I cannot say it, sir; and I beg you to spare me what a rash temper might possibly provoke me to utter."

"Say all that you will; I loved you, Alice."

"You will force me to leave you, sir, if you thus forget yourself."

"I loved you, and I love you still. Do not go, I beg, I implore you. As the proof of how I love you, I declare that I know all that you have heard of me, all that you have said of me; every harsh and cruel word. Ay, Alice, I have read them as your hand traced them, and through all, I love you."

"I will not stoop to ask how, sir; but I will say that the avowal has not raised you in my estimation."

"If I have not your love, I will never ask for your esteem, I wanted your affection, as a man wants that which would make his life a reality. I could have worked for you—I could have braved scores of things I have ever shrunk from; and I had a right to it."

"A right!—what right?"

"The right of him who loved as I did, and was as ready to prove his love. The man who has done what I have is no adventurer, though that fair hand wrote him one. Remember that, madam; and remember that you are in a land where men accept no such slights as this you would pass upon me." His eyes glared with passion as he spoke, and his dark cheeks grew purple. "You are not without those who must answer for your levity."

"Now, sir, I leave you," said she, rising.

"Not yet. You shall hear me out. I know why you have treated me thus falsely. I am aware who is my rival."

"Let me pass, sir."

He placed his back to the door, and folded his arms on his breast; but though he made an immense effort to seem calm, his lip shook as he spoke. "You shall hear me out. I tell you, I know my rival, and I am ready and prepared to stake my pretensions against his."

"Go on, sir, go on; very little more in this strain will efface any memory I preserved of what you first appeared to me."

"Oh, Alice!" cried he, in a voice of deep anguish. "It is despair has brought me to this. When I came, I thought I could have spoken with calm and self-restraint; but when I saw you—saw what I once believed might have been mine—I forgot all—all but my misery."

"Suffer me to pass out, sir," said she, coldly. He moved back, and opened the door wide, and held it thus as she swept past him, without a word or a look.

Maitland pressed his hat deep over his brow, and descended the stairs slowly, one by one. A carriage drove to the door as he reached it, and his friend Caffarelli sprang out and grasped his hand.

"Come quickly, Maitland!" cried he. "The King has left the palace. The army is moving out of Naples to take up a position at Capua. All goes badly. The fleet is wavering, and Garibaldi passed last night at Salerno."

"And what do I care for all this? Let me pass."

"Care for it! It is life or death, *caro mio!* In two hours more the populace will tear in pieces such men as you and myself, if we're found here. Listen to those yells, '*Morte ai Reali!*' Is it with 'Death to the Royalists!' ringing in our ears we are to linger here?"

"This is as good a spot to die in as another," said Maitland; and he lighted his cigar and sat down on the stone bench beside the door.

"The Twenty-fifth of the Line are in open revolt, and the last words of the King were, 'Give them to Maitland, and let him deal with them.'"

Maitland shrugged his shoulders, and smoked on.

"Genario has hoisted the cross of Savoy over the fort at Baia," continued the other, "and no one can determine what is to be done. They all say, 'Ask Maitland.'"

"Imitate him! Do the same over the Royal Palace!" said the other, mockingly.

"There, there! Listen to that cry! The mob are pouring down the Chiaja. Come away."

"Let us look at the scoundrels," said Maitland, taking his friend's arm, and moving into the street.

Caffarelli pushed and half lifted him into the carriage, and they drove off at speed.

CHAPTER LIV.

SKEFF DAMER TESTED.

When the Lyles returned from their drive, it was to find that Alice was too ill to come down to dinner. She had, she said, a severe headache, and wished to be left perfectly quiet and alone. This was a sore disappointment to Bella, brimful of all she had seen and heard, and burning with impatience to impart how Skeffy had been sent for by the King, and what he said to his Majesty, and how the royal plans had been modified by his sage words; and, in fact, that the fate of the Neapolitan kingdom was at that moment in the hands of that "gifted creature."

It was such she called him; and I beg my kind reader not to think the less of her that she so magnified her idol. The happiest days of our lives are the least real, just as the evils which never befall us are the greatest.

Bella was sincerely sorry for her sister's headache; but with all that, she kept stealing every now and then into her room to tell what Skeff said to Caraffa, and the immense effect it produced. "And then, dearest," she went on, "we have really done a great deal to-day. We have sent off three 'formal despatches,' and two 'confidentials,' and Skeff has told my Lord B., Secretary of State though he be, a piece of his mind—he does write so ably when he is roused; and he has declared that he will not carry out his late instructions. Few men would have had courage to say that; but they know that, if Skeff liked, he has only to go into Parliament: there are scores of boroughs actually fighting for him; he would be positively terrible in opposition."

A deep wearied sigh was all Alice's response.

"Yes, dearest, I'm sure I am tiring you; but I must tell how we liberated Mr. M'Gruder. He has been, he says, fifty-three days in prison, and really he looks wretched. I might have felt more for the man, but for the cold good-for-nothing way he took all Skeff's kindness. Instead of bursting with gratitude, and calling him his deliverer, all he said was, 'Well, sir, I think it was high time to have done this, which, for aught I

see, might just as easily have been done three or perhaps four weeks ago.' Skeff was magnificent; he only waved his hand, and said, 'Go; you are free!' 'I know that well enough,' said he, in the same sturdy voice; 'and I intend to make use of my freedom to let the British people know how I have been treated. You'll see honourable mention of it all, and yourself too, in the *Times*, before ten days are over.'"

"My dear Bella, my head is racking: would you just wet that handkerchief and lay it on my forehead?"

"My poor sweet Alice! and I so cruel, with all my stupid stories; but I thought you'd like to hear about Tony."

"Tony!—what of Tony?" asked she, raising herself on one elbow and looking up.

"Well, dearest, it was while in search after Tony that M'Gruder got imprisoned. They were sworn friends, it seems. You know, dear, Tony was never very particular in his choice of friends."

"But what of him—where is he?"

"I'll tell you everything, if you'll only have a little patience. Tony, who was living with M'Gruder in Leghorn—a partner, I think, in some odious traffic—cast-off clothes, I believe—grew tired of it, or got into debt, or did something that brought him into trouble, and he ran away and joined that mad creature Garibaldi."

"Well, go on,"

"Well, he had not been gone more than ten days or so, when a lawyer came out from England to say that his uncle, Sir Somebody Butler, had died and left him all he had—a fine estate and I don't know how much money. When Mr. M'Gruder was quite satisfied that all this was true—and like a canny Scotchman, he examined it thoroughly—he set off himself to find Tony and tell him his good news; for, as he said, it would have been a terrible thing to let him go risk his life for nothing, now that he had a splendid fortune and large estate. Indeed, you should have heard Mr. M'Gruder himself on this theme. It was about the strangest medley of romance and worldliness I ever listened to. After all, he was a staunch friend, and he braved no common dangers in his pursuit. He had scarcely landed however, in Sicily, when he was arrested and thrown into prison."

"And never met Tony?"

"Never—of course not; how could he? He did not even dare to speak of one who served under Garibaldi till he met Skeffy."

"But where is Tony? Is he safe? How are we to hear of him?" asked Alice, hurriedly.

"Skeff has undertaken all that, Alice. You know how he has relations with men of every party, and is equally at home with the wildest followers of Mazzini and the courtiers about the throne. He says he'll send off a confidential messenger at once to Garibaldi's camp with a letter for Tony. Indeed, it was all I could do to prevent him going himself, he is so attached to Tony, but I begged and implored him not to go."

"Tony would have done as much for him," said Alice, gloomily.

"Perhaps he would; but remember the difference between the men, Alice. If anything should befall Skeffy, who is there to replace him?"

Alice, perhaps, could not satisfactorily answer this, for she lay back on her bed, and covered her face with her hands.

"Not, indeed, that he would listen to me when I made that appeal to him, but he kept on repeating, 'Tony is the finest, truest-hearted fellow I ever met. *He*'d never have left a friend in the lurch; he'd never have thought of himself if another was in danger; and help him I must and will:' and that's the reason we are waiting dinner, dear, for he would go off to the Minister of War or the President of the Council; and he told papa, as he shook hands, on no account to wait for him, for he might be detained longer than he expected."

As she spoke a tap came to the door, and a servant announced dinner.

"Has Mr. Damer arrived?" asked Bella, eagerly.

"No, ma'am, but Sir Arthur has just got a note from him."

"I must see what he says!" cried she, and left the room.

Sir Arthur was reading the letter when she entered.

"Here's Skeff gone off to what he calls the 'front;' he says that Tony Butler has joined the insurgents, and he must get him out of their hands at any price."

"But of course, papa, you'll not permit it; you'll forbid him peremptorily," broke in Bella.

"I'm not so sure of that, Bella; because, amongst other reasons, I'm not so sure he'd mind me. Our gifted friend is endowed with considerable self-will."

"Immense determination, I should rather call it, papa; but, pray, try to stop this mad freak. He is not certainly called on to expose such a life as his, and at such a moment."

"What am I to do?"

"Go over to him at once—declare that you have the right to

speak on such a subject. Say that if he is pleased to overlook the necessity of his presence here at this crisis, he ought to remember his position with regard to us—ought to think of *me*," said she, with a burst of grief that ended in a shower of tears, and drove her from the room.

Sir Arthur was far more disposed to sit down to his dinner than go off on this mission of affection; but Lady Lyle took the same view of the case as her daughter, and there was no help for it. And although the bland butler repeated "Soup is served, sir," the poor man had to step downstairs to his carriage and drive off to the Legation.

On arriving there, he learned that his Excellency had gone to see the Prime Minister. Sir Arthur set off in the pursuit, which led him from one great office of the state to another, always to discover that the object of his search had just left only five minutes before; till at length his patience became exhausted on hearing that Mr. Damer was last seen in company with an officer of rank on the road to Castelamare, whither, certainly, he determined not to follow him.

It was near nine o'clock when he got home to report himself unsuccessful, to meet dark looks from his wife and daughter, and sit down alone to a comfortless dinner, chagrined and disconcerted.

Lady Lyle tried to interest him by relating the news of Tony Butler's accession to fortune; but the re-heated mutton and the half-cold *entrées* were too trying to leave any portion of his nature open to such topics, and he sulkily muttered something about the folly of "having snubbed the young fellow"—a taunt Lady Lyle resented by rising and leaving him to his own reflections.

And now to turn to Skeff Damer. I am forced to confess, and I do not make the confession without a certain pain, that our gifted friend had not that amount of acceptance with the ministers of the King that his great talents and his promise might be supposed to have inspired; nor had he succeeded in acquiring for the country he represented the overwhelming influence he believed to be her due. When therefore, he drove to Caraffa's house, the Prince frankly told him, what certainly was true, that he had affairs far too weighty on his mind to enter upon that small question H.M.'s Chargé d'Affaires desired to discuss. "Try Carini," said he, "the Minister of Grace and Justice; he looks after the people who break the law." Skeff grew angry, and the Minister bowed him out. He went in succession to some five or six others, all occupied, all overwhelmed with cares,

troubles, and anxieties. At last, by a mere accident, he chanced upon Filangieri going off to wait on the King: he was accompanied by a small man, in a very gorgeous uniform, studded over with stars and decorations.

In a few hurried words Skeff told how his friend, a man of rank and fortune, had been seduced by some stupid representations to take service with Garibaldi, and that it was all-important to rescue him from such evil associations, and restore him at once to his friends and country.

"Where is he?"

"Wherever Garibaldi may be—I can't tell."

"He's nearer than we like," said the other, with a faint smile. "Are you sure your friend will return with you, even if you should track him out?"

"I think I can answer for him. I am almost certain that I can."

"Can you answer for Garibaldi too?—will *he* give him up?"

"I believe Garibaldi cares a great deal for the good opinion of England; and when he sees *me*, her Majesty's——"

"Yes, yes, I can understand that. Well, I have no time to give you for more consideration of the matter; but I'll do better. I'll give you this gentleman—my aide-de-camp, Colonel the Count M'Caskey: he'll pass you through our lines, and go, as flag of truce, to the head-quarters of the rebels. The whole thing is a blunder, and I am doing exceedingly wrong; but here we are, making one mistake after another every day, and all regularity and order are totally forgotten." Turning to M'Caskey, he took him aside for a few seconds and spoke eagerly and rapidly to him, and then, once more shaking Skeff's hand, he wished him well through his adventure and drove off.

"Whenever you have all in readiness, sir," said M'Caskey, slightly raising his hat—"and I hope your carriage is a comfortable one—take me up at the Aquila d'Oro, two doors from the Cafe di Spagno;" uttering the words in a tone of such positive command that Skeffy had only to accede; and, coldly bowing to each other, they separated.

CHAPTER LV.

AMONGST THE GARIBALDIANS.

By heavy bribery and much cajolery, Skeff Damer secured a carriage and horses, and presented himself at the Café di Spagna a little before midnight. It was not, however, till he had summoned M'Caskey for the third time that the gallant Colonel arose and joined him.

"I suspect that waiter did not tell you I was here, and waiting for you?" said Skeff, somewhat irritated.

"I rather apprehend," replied M'Caskey, "that you were not aware I was at supper."

With this brief passage of arms each sank back into his corner, and nothing more was said.

For a long while the way led through that long suburb of Naples that lies on the south of the city, and the tramp of the horses over the pavement would have made any conversation difficult to hear. At length, however, they gained the smooth road, and then Skeff discovered, from the long-drawn breathings of his companion, that he was sound asleep.

By the small wax taper with which he lighted his cigar, Skeff examined the features of the man; and, brief as was the inspection, there was enough seen to show him that he was not a subject for either dictation or raillery. The hard, stern, thin-lipped mouth, the knitted brows, the orbits marked with innumerable wrinkles, and an ugly scar, evidently from a sabre, that divided one whisker, and reached from nigh the ear to the chin, presented enough to show that he might easily have chanced upon a more genial fellow-traveller.

Skeff knew that the Neapolitan service had for some years back attracted adventurers from various countries. Poles, Americans, with Irish and Hungarian refugees, had flocked to the scene of what they foresaw must be a struggle, and taken their side with the Royalists or against them as profit or inclination prompted. Now this man's name, M'Caskey, proclaimed him as Irish or Scotch; and the chances were, in either case, if a renegade from his own country, he would not

be over well disposed towards one who represented the might and majesty of England.

"If I could only let him see," thought Skeff, "that I am one of those fellows who have done everything and know every one, a thorough man of the world, and no red-tapist, no official pendant, we should get on all the better." He puffed away at his cigar as he thus mused, turning over in his mind by what species of topic he should open acquaintance with his companion.

"That's good tobacco," said M'Casky, without opening his eyes. "Who's smoking the cheroot?"

"I am. May I offer you one?"

"A dozen if you like," said the Colonel, giving himself a shake, and sitting bolt upright.

Skeff held out his cigar-case, and the other coolly emptied it, throwing the contents into his hat, which lay on the cushion in front of him.

"When old Olozaga was Captain-General of Cuba, he always supplied me with havannahs; but when O'Donnell's party came into power I came down to cheroots, and there I have been ever since. These are not bad."

"They are considered particularly good, sir," said Skeff, coldly.

"*That* I will not say; but I own I am not easy to please either in wine, women, or tobacco."

"You have had probably large experiences of all three?"

"I should like much to meet the man who called himself my equal."

"It might be presumptuous in me, perhaps, to stand forward on such ground; but I, too, have seen something of life."

"You! you!" said M'Caskey, with a most frank impertinence in his tone.

"Yes, sir, I, I—Mr. Skeffington Damer, Her Majesty's Representative and Chargé d' Affaires at this Court."

"Where the deuce was it I heard your name? Damer—Damer—Skeff—Skeffy—I think they called you? Who could it be that mentioned you?"

"Not impossibly the newspapers, though I suspect they did not employ the familiarity you speak of."

"Well, Skeff, what's all this business we're bent on? What wildgoose chase are we after here?"

Damer was almost sick with indignation at the fellow's freedom; he nearly burst with the effort it cost him to repress his passion; but he remembered how poor Tony Butler's fate

lay in the balance, and that if anything should retard his journey by even an hour, that one hour might decide his friend's destiny.

"Might I take the liberty to observe, sir, that our acquaintance is of the very shortest; and until I shall desire, which I do not anticipate, the privilege of addressing you by your Christian name——"

"I am called Milo," said M'Caskey; "but no man ever called me so but the late Duke of Wellington; and once, indeed, in a moment of enthusiasm, poor Byron."

"I shall not imitate them, and I desire that you may know me as Mr. Damer."

"Damer or Skeffy—I don't care a rush which—only tell me where are we going, and what are we going for?"

Skeff proceeded in leisurely fashion, but with a degree of cold reserve that he hoped might check all freedom, to explain that he was in search of a young countryman, whom he desired to recall from his service with Garibaldi, and restore to his friends in England.

"And you expect me to cross over to Garibaldi's lines?" asked M'Caskey, with a grin.

"I certainly reckon on your accompanying me wherever I deem it essential to proceed in furtherance of my object. Your general said as much when he offered me your services."

"No man disposes of M'Caskey but the Sovereign he serves."

"Then I can't see what you have come for!" cried Skeff, angrily.

"Take care, take care," said the other, slowly.

"Take care of what?"

"Take care of Skeffington Damer, who is running his head into a very considerable scrape. I have the most tenacious of memories; and there's not a word—not a syllable—falls from you, I'll not make you accountable for hereafter."

"If you imagine, sir, that a tone of braggadocio——"

"There you go again. Braggadocio costs blood, my young fellow."

"I'm not to be bullied."

"No; but you might be shot."

"You'll find me as ready as yourself with the pistol."

"I am charmed to hear it, though I never met a fellow brought up at a desk that was so."

Skeff was by no means deficient in courage, and, taken with a due regard to all the conventional usages of such cases, he

would have "met his man" as became a gentleman; but it was such a new thing in his experiences to travel along in a carriage arranging the terms of a duel with the man who ought to have been his pleasant compa ion, and who indeed, at the very moment, was smoking his cheroots, that he lost himself in utter bewilderment and confusion.

"What does that small flask contain?" said M'Caskey, pointing to a straw-co ered bottle, whose neck protruded from the pocket of the carriage.

"Cherry brandy," said Skeff, dryly, as he buttoned the pocket-flap over it.

"It is years upon years since I tasted that truly British cordial."

Skeff made no reply.

"They never make it abroad, except in Switzerland, and there, too, badly."

Still Skeff was silent.

"Have you got a sandwich with you?"

"There is something eatable in that basket—I don't know what," said Skeff, pointing to a little neatly-corded hamper. "But I thought you had just finished supper when I drove up."

"You're a Londoner, I take it," said M'Caskey.

"Why so, sir? for what reason do you suppose so?"

"The man who reminds another of the small necessity there is to press him to take something—be it meat or drink—must be a Cockney."

"I am neither a Cockney, nor accustomed to listen to impertinence."

"Hand me your flask and I'll give you my opinion of it, and that will be better than this digression."

The impudence seemed superhuman, and in this way overcame all power of resistance; and Skeffy actually sat there looking on while M'Caskey cut the cords of the little provision-basket, and arranged the contents on the front seat of the carriage, assuring him, as he ate, that he "had tasted worse"

For some time the Major continued to eat and drink, and was so completely immersed in this occupation as to seem quite oblivious of his companion. He then lighted his cigar and smoked on till they reached Caserta, where the carriage halted to change horses.

"The fellow is asking for something for the ostler," said M'Caskey, nudging Skeffy with his elbow as he spoke.

"My servant, sir, looks to these details," said Skeffy, haughtily.

"Take these, old boy," said M'Caskey, pitching out to him the basket with the fragments of his late meal, and the silver forks and cup it contained; and the horses whirled the carriage along at full speed as he did so.

"You are perfectly munificent, sir," cried Skeff, angrily, "with what does not belong to you. The proprietor of the Hotel d'Universo will probably look to you for payment for his property."

"If your friend of the Universo has a salt spoon of his own this time to-morrow, he'll be a lucky dog."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that as the troops withdraw, pillage will begin. There is but one force in Naples that could control a mob."

"And that is?"

"The Camorra! and but one man could command the Camorra, and he is here!"

"Indeed!" said Skeff, with the very faintest possible sarcasm.

"As I tell you, sir. Colonel M'Caskey might have saved that city; and, instead of it, he is rumbling along over a paved road, going heaven knows where with heaven knows whom, for heaven knows what!"

"You are either rude or forgetful, sir. I have already told you my name and quality."

"So you have, Skeff; but as a man rises in the service, he forgets the name of the uncommissioned officers. You are attaché, or what is it?"

"I am Chargé d'Affaires of Great Britain."

"And devilish few will be the affairs you'll have in your charge this day week."

"How do you make out that?"

"First of all, if we are to pass through our lines to reach Garibaldi, all our fellows will fire a parting salute after us as we go—ay, and with ball. Secondly, as we approach the rebels they'll pay us the same attention."

"Not with our flag of truce flying."

"Your flag of truce, Skeffy, will only show them that we come unarmed, and make their aim all the steadier in consequence."

"And why was I told that your presence would be protection?"

"Because, sir, if it should fail to be, it is that no other man's in Europe could be such."

"I'll not turn back, if you mean that," said Skeff, boldly; and for the first time on the journey M'Caskey turned round and took a leisurely survey of his companion.

"You are, I hope, satisfied with my personal appearance," said Skeff, insolently.

"Washy, washy," said M'Caskey, dryly; "but I have met two or three of the same stamp who had pluck."

"The freedom of your tongue, sir, inclines me very considerably to doubt *yours*."

M'Caskey made a bound on his seat, and threw his cigar through the window, while he shouted to the postilion to stop.

"Why should he stop?" asked Skeff.

"Let us settle this at once; we'll take each of us one of the carriage lamps and fire at the word three. One—two—three! Stop, I say."

"No, sir; I shall hold myself at your orders, time and place fitting, but I'll neither shoot nor be shot at like a brigand."

"I have travelled with many men, but in my long and varied experience, I never saw a fellow so full of objections. You oppose everything. Now I mean to go asleep; have you anything against *that*, and what is it?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever!" muttered Skeff, who for the first time heard words of comfort from his companion's lips.

Poor Skeff! is it too much to say that, if you had ever imagined the possibility of such a fellow-traveller, you would have thought twice ere you went on this errand of friendship? Perhaps it might be unfair to allege so much, but unquestionably, if his ardour were not damped, his devotion to his friend was considerably disturbed by thoughts of himself and his own safety.

Where could this monster have come from? What land could have given him birth? What life had he led? how could a fellow of such insolent pretensions have escaped being flayed alive ere he reached the age he looked to be?

Last of all, was it in malice and out of malevolence that Filangieri had given him this man as his guide, well knowing what their companionship must end in? This last suspicion, reassuring so far, as it suggested dreams of personal importance, rallied him a little, and at last he fell asleep.

The hours of the night rolled over thus; and just as the dawn was breaking the calèche rattled into the ruinous old

piazza of Nocera. Early as it was, the market-place was full of people, amongst whom were many soldiers, with or without arms, but evidently under no restraint of discipline, and to all seeming doubtful and uncertain what to do.

Aroused from his sleep by the sudden stoppage of the carriage, M'Caskey rubbed his eyes and looked out. "What is all this?" cried he. "Who are these fellows I see here in uniform? What are they?"

"Part of Cardarelli's brigade, your Excellency," said a café-keeper who had come to the carriage to induce the travellers to alight. "General Cardarelli has surrendered Soveria to Garibaldi, and his men have dispersed."

"And is there no officer in command here to order these fellows into arrest?" cried M'Caskey, as he sprang out of the carriage into the midst of them. "Fall in!" shouted he in a voice of thunder; "fall in, and be silent: the fellow who utters a word I'll put a bullet through."

If the first sight of the little fellow thus insolently issuing his orders might have inspired laughter, his fierce look, his flashing eye, his revolver in hand, and his coat blazing with orders, speedily overcame such a sentiment, and the disorderly rabble seemed actually stunned into deference before him.

"What!" cried he, "are you deserters? Is it with an enemy in front that I find you here? Is it thus that you show these civilians what stuff soldiers are made of?" There was not a degrading epithet, not a word of infamous reproach, he did not hurl at them. They were Vili! Birbanti! Ladri! Malandrini! Codardi! They had dishonoured their fathers and mothers, and wives and sweethearts. They had degraded the honour of the soldier, and the Virgin herself was ashamed of them. "Who laughs there? Let him come out to the front and laugh here!" cried he. And now, though a low murmur little indicative of mirth ran through the crowd, strange to say, the men began to slink away, at first one by one, then in groups and parties, so that in very few minutes the piazza was deserted, save by a few of the townsfolk, who stood there half-terrified, half fascinated by the daring insolence of this diminutive hero.

Though his passion seemed almost choking him, he went on with a wonderful fluency to abuse the whole nation. They were brigands for three centuries, and brigands they would be for thirty more, if Providence would not send an earthquake to swallow them up, and rid the world of such rascals. He scoffed at them, he jeered them; he told them that the few

Sicilians that followed Garibaldi would make slaves of the whole kingdom, taking from the degenerate cowards of Calabria wives, daughters, home, and households; and it was only when the last straggler shuffled slowly away, and he stood alone in the square, that he would consent to re-enter the carriage and pursue his journey.

"I'll know every face amongst them if I meet them again," said he to Skeffy, "and it will be an evil day for the scoundrels when that time comes." His wrath continued during the entire stage, and never flagged in its violence till they reached a cluster of poor cabins, around which a guard of soldiers was stationed. Here they were refused a further passage, since at Mauro, three miles further on, Melani, with a force of three thousand men and some guns, held the pass against the Garibaldians. M'Caskey was not long in explaining who he was, nor indeed very modest in proclaiming his personal importance; and the subaltern, with every show of deference to such greatness, detached a corporal of his guard to accompany them to the General's quarters. The General was asleep when they reached Mauro; he had been, they said, "up all night," but they did not add it was in the celebration of an orgie, in which the festivities were more classic than correct. M'Caskey, however, learned that at about five miles in front, Garibaldi's advanced-guard was posted, and that Garibaldi himself had ridden up and reconnoitred their position on the evening before.

"We expect to be attacked by noon," said the officer, in a tone the very reverse of hopeful or encouraging.

"You can hold this pass against twenty thousand," said M'Caskey.

"We shall not try," said the other. "Why should we be the only men to get cut to pieces?"

The ineffable scorn of the little Colonel as he turned away was not lost on the other; but he made no reply to it, and retired. "We are to have an escort as far as Ravello; after that we are to take care of ourselves: and I own to you I think we shall be all the safer when we get out of the reach of his Majesty's defenders."

"There," cried the sergeant who acted as their guard—"there, on that rock yonder, are the Reds. I'll go no further."

And as they looked they saw a small group of red-shirted fellows lying or lounging on a small cliff which rose abruptly over a stream crossed by a wooden bridge. Attaching his handkerchief to his walking-stick, M'Caskey stepped out

boldly. Skeffy followed; they reached the bridge, and crossed it, and stood within the lines of the Garibaldians. A very young, almost boyish-looking, officer met them, heard their story, and with much courtesy told them that he would send one of his men to conduct them to head-quarters. "You will not find the General there," said he, smiling, — "he's gone on in that direction," and he pointed, as he spoke, towards Naples.

Skeff asking eagerly if the young officer had ever heard of Tony Butler, and described with ardour the handsome face and figure of his friend. The other believed he had seen him. There was, he knew, a *giovane Irlandese* who was wounded at Melazzo, and, if he was not mistaken, wounded again about four days back at Lauria. "All the wounded are at Salerno, however," said he carelessly, "and you are sure to find him amongst them."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE HOSPITAL AT CAVA.

Had Skeff been in any mood for mirth, he might have enjoyed as rich drollery the almost inconceivable impertinence of his companion, who scrutinized everything, and freely distributed his comments around him, totally regardless that he stood in the camp of the enemy, and actually surrounded by men whose extreme obedience to discipline could scarcely be relied on.

"Uniformity is certainly not studied here," cried M'Caskey, as he stared at a guard about to be detached on some duty; "three fellows have grey trousers; two, blue; one, a sort of canvas petticoat; and I see only one real coat in the party."

A little further on he saw a group of about a dozen lying on the grass smoking, with their arms in disorderly fashion about, and he exclaimed, "How I'd like to surprise those rascals, and make a swoop down here with two or three companies of Cacciatori! Look at their muskets; there hasn't been one of them cleaned for a month.

"Here they are at a meal of some sort. Well, men won't fight on beans and olive oil. My Irish fellows are the only devils can stand up on roots."

These comments were all delivered in Italian, and listened to with a sort of bewildered astonishment, as though the man who spoke them must possess some especial and peculiar privilege to enable him to indulge so much candour.

"That's not a knapsack," said he, kicking a soldier's pack that he saw on the grass: "that's more like a travelling tinker's bundle. Open it, and let's see the inside!" cried he to the owner, who, awed by the tone of command, immediately obeyed, and M'Caskey ridiculed the shreds and patches of raiment, the tattered fragments of worn apparel, in which fragments of cheese and parcels of tobacco were rolled up. "Why, the fellows have not even risen to the dignity of pillage," said he.

"I was sure we should have found some saintly ornament or a piece of the Virgin's petticoat among their wares."

With all this freedom, carried to the extreme of impertinence, none molested, none ever questioned them; and as the guide had accidentally chanced upon some old friends by the way, he told M'Caskey that they had no further need of him—that the road lay straight before them, and that they would reach Cava in less than an hour.

At Cava they found the same indifference. They learned that Garibaldi had not come up, though some said he had passed on with a few followers to Naples, and others maintained that he had sent to the King of Naples to meet him at Salerno to show him the inutility of all resistance, and offer him a safe-conduct out of the kingdom. Leaving M'Caskey in the midst of these talkers, and not perhaps without some uncharitable wish that the gallant Colonel's bad tongue would involve him in serious trouble, Skeffy slipped away to inquire after Tony.

Every one seemed to know that there was a brave "*Irlandese*," —a daring fellow who had shown himself in the thick of every fight; but the discrepant accounts of his personal appearance and looks were most confusing. Tony was fair-haired, and yet most of the descriptions represented a dark man, with a bushy black beard and mustache. At all events, he was lying wounded at the convent of the Cappuccini, on a hill about a mile from the town; and Father Pantaleo—Garibaldi's Vicar, as he was called—offered his services to show him the way. The Frate—a talkative little fellow, with a fringe of curly dark-brown hair around a polished white head—talked away, as they went, about the war, and Garibaldi, and the grand future that lay before Italy, when the tyranny of the Pope should be overthrown, and the Church made as free—and indeed he almost said as easy—as any jovial Christian could desire.

Skeffy, by degrees, drew him to the subject nearest his own heart at the moment, and asked about the wounded in hospital. The Frate declared that there was nothing very serious the matter with any of them. He was an optimist. Some died, some suffered amputations, some were torn by shells or grape-shot. But what did it signify? as he said. It was a great cause they were fighting for, and they all agreed it was a pleasure to shed one's blood for Italy. "As for the life up there," said he, pointing to the convent, "it is a *vita da Santi*—the 'life of saints themselves.'"

"Do you know my friend Tony the Irlandese?" asked Skeff, eagerly.

"If I know him! *Per Bacco!* I think I know him. I was with him when he had his leg taken off."

Skeff's heart sickened at this terrible news, and he could barely steady himself by catching the Fra's arm. "Oh, my poor dear Tony," cried he, as the tears ran down his face—"my poor fellow!"

"Why did you pity him? Garibaldi gave him his own sword, and made him an officer on the day of the battle. It was up at Calanzaro, so that he's nearly well now."

Skeff poured in innumerable questions. How the mischance occurred, and where? how he bore up under the dreadful operation? in what state he then was? if able to move about, and how? And as the Fra was one of those who never confessed himself unable to answer anything, the details he obtained were certainly of the fullest and most circumstantial.

"He's always singing; that's how he passes his time," said the Frate.

"Singing! how strange! I never knew him to sing. I never heard him even hum a tune."

"You'll hear him now, then. The fellows about curse at him half the day to be silent, but he doesn't mind them, but sings away. The only quiet moment he gives them is while he's smoking."

"Ah, yes! he loves smoking."

"There—stop. Listen. Do you hear him? he's at it now." Skeff halted, and could hear the sound of a full deep voice, from a window overhead, in one of those prolonged and melancholy cadences which Irish airs abound in.

"Wherever he got such doleful music I can't tell, but he has a dozen chants like that."

Though Skeff could not distinguish the sounds, nor recognize the voice of his friend, the thought that it was poor Tony who was there singing in his solitude, maimed and suffering, without one near to comfort him, so overwhelmed him that he staggered towards a bench, and sat down sick and faint.

"Go up and say that a friend, a dear friend, has come from Naples to see him; and if he is not too nervous or too much agitated, tell him my name; here it is." The friar took the card and hurried forward on his mission. In less time than Skeff thought it possible for him to have arrived, Pantaleo called out from the window, "Come along; he is quite ready to see you, though he doesn't remember you."

Skeff fell back upon the seat at the last words. "Not remember me! my poor Tony—my poor, poor fellow—how

changed and shattered you must be, to have forgotten me!" With a great effort he rallied, entered the gate, and mounted the stairs—slowly, indeed, and like one who dreaded the scene that lay before him. Pantaleo met him at the top, and, seeing his agitation, gave him his arm for support. "Don't be nervous," said he, "your friend is doing capitally: he is out on the terrace in an arm-chair and looks as jolly as a cardinal."

Summoning all his courage, Skeff walked bravely forwards, passed down the long aisle, crowded with sick and wounded on either side, and passed out upon a balcony at the end, where with his back towards him, a man sat looking out over the landscape.

"Tony, Tony!" said Skeffy, coming close. The man turned his head, and Skeff saw a massive-looking face, all covered with black hair, and a forehead marked by a sabre cut. "This is not my friend. This is not Tony!" cried he, in disappointment.

"No, sir; I'm Rory Quin, the man that was with him," said the wounded man, submissively.

"And where is he himself? Where is Tony?" cried he.

"In the little room beyond, sir. They put him there when he began to rave; but he's better now, and quite sensible."

"Take me to him at once; let me see him," said Skeff, whose impatience had now mastered all prudence.

The moment after, Skeff found himself in a small chamber, with a single bed in it, beside which a Sister of Charity was seated, busily employed laying cloths wet with iced water on the sick man's head. One glance showed that it was Tony. The eyes were closed, and the face thinner, and the lips dry; but there was a hardy manhood in the countenance, sick and suffering as he was, that told what qualities a life of hardship and peril had called into activity. The Sister motioned to Skeff to sit down, but not to speak. "He's not sleeping," said she softly, "only dozing."

"Is he in pain?" asked Skeffy.

"No; I have no pain," said Tony, faintly.

Skeff bent down to whisper some words close to his ear, when he heard a step behind. He looked up and saw it was M'Caskey, who had followed him. "I came here, sir," said the Colonel, haughtily, "to express my astonishment at your unceremonious departure, and also to say that I shall now hold myself as free of all further engagement towards you."

"Hush, be quiet," said Skeff, with a gesture of caution.

"Is that your friend?" asked M'Caskey with a smile.

Tony slowly opened his eyes at these words, looking at the speaker, turning his gaze then on Skeff, gave a weak, sickly smile, and then in a faint, scarce audible voice, said, "So he *is* your godfather, after all."

Skeff's heart grew full to bursting, and for a moment or two he could not speak.

"There—there, no more," whispered the Sister, and she motioned them both to withdraw. Skeff arose at once, and slipped noiselessly away, but the Colonel stepped boldly along, regardless of everything and every one.

"He's wandering in his mind," said M'Caskey in a loud, unfeeling tone.

"By all that's holy, there's the scoundrel I'm dying to get at," screamed Rory, as the voice caught his ear. "Give me that crutch; let me have one lick at him, for the love of Mary."

"They're all mad here, that's plain," said M'Caskey, turning away with a contemptuous air. "Sir," added he, turning towards Skeff, "I have the honour to salute you;" and with a magnificent bow he withdrew, while Rory, in a voice of wildest passion and invective, called down innumerable curses on his head, and inveighed even against the bystanders for not securing the "greatest villain in Europe."

"I shall want to send a letter to Naples," cried out Skeff to the Colonel; "I mean to remain here;" but M'Caskey never deigned to notice his words, but walked proudly down the stairs and went his way.

CHAPTER LVII.

AT TONY'S BEDSIDE.

My story draws to a close, and I have not space to tell how Skeff watched beside his friend, rarely quitting him, and showing in a hundred ways the resources of a kind and thoughtful nature. Tony had been severely wounded; a sabre-cut had severed his scalp, and he had been shot through the shoulder; but all apprehension of evil consequences was now over, and he was able to listen to Skeff's wondrous tidings, and hear all the details of his accession to wealth and fortune. His mother—how she would rejoice at it! how happy it would make her!—not for her own sake, but for his; how it would seem to repay to her all she had suffered from the haughty estrangement of Sir Omerod, and how proud she would be at the recognition, late though it came! These were Tony's thoughts; and very often, when Skeff imagined him to be following the details of his property, and listening with eagerness to the description of what he owned, Tony was far away in thought at the cottage beside the Causeway, and longing ardently when he should sit at the window with his mother at his side planning out some future in which they were to be no more separated.

There was no elation at his sudden fortune, nor any of that anticipation of indulgence which Skeff himself would have felt, and which he indeed suggested. No. Tony's whole thoughts so much centred in his dear mother, that she entered into all his projects; and there was not a picture of enjoyment wherein she was not a foreground figure.

They would keep the cottage—that was his first resolve: his mother loved it dearly; it was associated with years long of happiness and of trials too; and trials can endear a spot when they are nobly borne, and the heart will cling fondly to that which has chastened its emotions and elevated its hopes. And then, Tony thought, they might obtain that long stretch of land that lay along the shore, with the little nook where the boats lay at anchor, and where he would have his yacht. "I suppose," said

he, "Sir Arthur Lyle would have no objection to my being so near a neighbour?"

"Of course not; but we can soon settle that point, for they are all here."

"Here?"

"At Naples I mean."

"How was it that you never told me that?" he asked sharply.

Skeff fidgetted—bit his cigar—threw it away; and with more confusion than became so distinguished a diplomatist, stammered out, "I have had so much to tell you—such lots of news;" and then with an altered voice he added, "besides, old fellow, the doctor warned me not to say anything that might agitate you; and I thought—that is, I used to think—there was something in that quarter, eh?"

Tony grew pale, but made no answer.

"I know she likes you, Tony," said Skeff, taking his hand and pressing it. "Bella, who is engaged to me—I forget if I told you that——"

"No, you never told me!"

"Well, Bella and I are to be married immediately—that is as soon as I can get back to England. I have asked for leave already; they've refused me twice. It's all very fine saying to me that I ought to know that in the present difficulties of Italy no man could replace me at this Court. My answer to that is: Skeff Damer has other stuff in him as well as ambition. He has a heart just as much as a head. Nor am I to go on passing my life saving this dynasty. The Bourbons are not so much to me as my own happiness, eh?"

"I suppose not," said Tony, dryly.

"You'd have done the same, wouldn't you?'

"I can't tell. I cannot even imagine myself filling any station of responsibility or importance."

"My reply was brief: Leave for six months' time, to recruit an over-taxed frame and over-wrought intellect; time also for them to look out what to offer me, for I'll not go to Mexico, nor to Rio; neither will I take Washington, nor any of the Northern Courts. Dearest Bella must have climate, and I myself must have congenial society; and so I said, not in such terms, but in meaning, Skeff Damer is only yours at *his* price. Let them refuse me—let me see them even hesitate, and I give my word of honour, I'm capable of abandoning public life altogether, and retiring into my woods at Tilney, leaving the whole thing at sixes and sevens."

Now, though Tony neither knew what the "whole thing"

meant, nor the dire consequences to which his friend's anger might have consigned it, he muttered something that sounded like a hope that he would not leave Europe to shift for herself at such a moment.

"Let them not drive me to it, that's all," said he, haughtily; and he arose and walked up and down with an air of defiance. "The Lyles do not see this—Lady Lyle especially. She wants a peerage for her daughter, but ambition is not always scrupulous."

"I always liked her the least of them," muttered Tony, who never could forget the sharp lesson she administered to him.

"She'll make herself more agreeable to you now, Master Tony," said Skeff, with a dry laugh.

"And why so?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"On your word?"

"On my word, I cannot."

"Don't you think Mr. Butler of something or other in Herefordshire is another guess man from Tony Butler of nowhere in particular?"

"Ah! I forgot my change of fortune; but if I had ever remembered it, I'd never have thought so meanly of *her*."

"That's all rot and nonsense. There's no meanness in a woman wanting to marry her daughter well, any more than in a man trying to get a colonelcy or a legation for his son. You were no match for Alice Trafford three months ago. Now both she and her mother will think differently of your pretensions."

"Say what you like of the mother, but you shall not impute such motives to Alice."

"Don't you get red in the face and look like a tiger, young man, or I'll take my leave and send that old damsel here with the ice-pail to you."

"It was the very thing I liked in you," muttered Tony, "that you never did impute mean motives to women."

"My poor Tony! the fellow who has seen life as I have, who knows the thing in its most minute anatomy, comes out of the investigation infernally case-hardened; he can't help it. I love Alice. Indeed, if I had not seen Bella, I think I should have married Alice. There, you are getting turkey-cock again. Let us talk of something else. What the deuce was it I wanted to ask you?—something about that great Irish monster in the next room, the fellow that sings all day: where did you pick him up?"

Tony made no reply, but lay with his hand over his eyes, while Skeff went on rambling over the odds and ends he had picked up in the course of Rory Quin's story, and the devoted love he bore to Tony himself. "By the way, they say that it was for you Garibaldi intended the promotion to the rank of officer, but that you managed to pass it to this fellow, who couldn't sign his name when they asked him for it."

"If he couldn't write, he has left his mark on some of the Neapolitans!" said Tony, fiercely; "and as for the advancement, he deserved it far more than I did."

"It was a lucky thing for that aide-de-camp of Filangieri who accompanied me here, that your friend Rory hadn't got two legs, for he wanted to brain him with his crutch. Both of you had an antipathy to him, and indeed I own to concurring in the sentiment. My godfather you called him!" said he, laughing.

"I wish he had come a little closer to my bedside, that's all," muttered Tony; and Skeff saw by the expression of his features that he was once more unfortunate in his attempt to hit upon an unexciting theme.

"Alice knew of your journey here, I think you said?" whispered Tony, faintly.

"Yes. I sent them a few lines to say I was setting out to find you."

"How soon could I get to Naples? Do you think they would let me move to-morrow?"

"I have asked that question already. The doctor says in a week; and I must hasten away to-night,—there's no saying what confusion my absence will occasion. I mean to be back here by Thursday to fetch you."

"Good fellow! Remember, though," added he, after a moment, "we must take Rory. I can't leave Rory here."

Skeff looked gravely.

"He carried *me* when I was wounded out of the fire at Melazzo, and I am not going to desert him now."

"Strange situation for her Majesty's Chrrgé d'Affaires," said Skeff—"giving protection to the wounded of the rebel army."

"Don't talk to me of rebels. We are as legitimate as the fellows we were fighting against. It was a good stand-up fight, too—man to man, some of it; and if it wasn't that my head reels so when I sit or stand up, I'd like to be at it again."

"It is a fine bull-dog—just a bull-dog," said Skeff, patting him on the head, while in the compassionate pity of his voice he showed how humbly he ranked the qualities he ascribed to

him. "Ah! now I remember what it was I wished to ask you (it escaped me till this moment): who is the creature that calls himself Sam M'Gruder?"

"As good a fellow as ever stepped, and a true friend of mine. What of him?"

"Don't look as if you would tear me in pieces, and scatter the fragments to the four winds of heaven. Sir, I'll not stand it—none of your buccaneering savageries to *me!*"

Tony laughed, and laughed heartily at the air of offended dignity of the other; and Skeff was himself disposed at last to smile at his own anger. "That's the crying sin of *your* nature, Tony," said he, "It is the one defect that spoils a really fine fellow. I tell you frankly about it, because I'm your friend; and if you don't curb it, you'll never be anything—never! never!"

"But what is this fault? you have forgotten to tell it."

"Over and over again have I told it. It is your stupid animal confidence in your great hulking form: your coarse reliance on your massive shoulders—a degenerate notion that muscle means manhood. It is here, sir—here;" and Skeff touched his forehead with the tip of his finger; "here lies the godlike attribute. And until you come to feel that, you never will have arrived at the real dignity of a great creature."

"Well, if I be the friend of one, Skeffy, it will satisfy all my ambition," said he, grasping his hand warmly; "and now what of M'Gruder? how did you come to know of him?"

"Officially; officially, of course. Skeffington Damer and Sam M'Gruder might revolve in ether for centuries and their orbits never cross! but it happened this honest fellow had gone off in search of you into Sicily; and with that blessed propensity for blundering the British subject is gifted with, had managed to offend the authorities and get imprisoned. Of course he appealed to me. They all appeal to *me!* but at the moment, unhappily for him, the King was appealing to *me*, and Cavour was appealing to *me*, and so was the Emperor; and, I may mention in confidence, so was Garibaldi!—not in person, bot through a friend. I know these things must be. Whenever a fellow has a head on his shoulders in this world, the other fellows who have no heads find it out and work *him*. Ay, sir, work him! That's why I have said over and over again the stupid dogs have the best of it. I declare to you, on my honour, Tony, there are days I'd rather be *you* than be Skeff Damer!"

Tony shook his head.

"I know it sounds absurd, but I pledge you my sacred word of honour I *have* felt it."

"And M'Gruder?" asked Tony.

"M'Gruder, sir, I liberated! I said, Free him! and, like the fellow in Curran's celebrated passage, his chains fell to the ground, and he stood forward, not a bit grateful—far from it—but a devilish crusty Scotchman, telling me what a complaint he'd lodge against me as soon as he arrived in England."

"No, no; he's not the fellow to do that."

"If he did, sir, *it* would crush him! The Emperor of Russia could not prefer a complaint against Skeff Damer, and feel the better of it!"

"He's a true-hearted, fine fellow," said Tony.

"With all my heart I concede to him all the rough virtues you may desire to endow him with; but please to bear in mind, Master Tony, that a man of your station and your fortune cannot afford such intimacies as your friend Rory here and this M'Gruder creature."

"Then I was a richer man when I had nothing, for I *could* afford it then," said Tony, sturdily; "and I tell you more, Skeffy—I mean to afford it still. There is no fellow living I love better—no, nor as well—as I love yourself; but even for your love I'll not give up the fine-hearted fellows who were true to me in my days of hardship, shared with me what they had, and gave me—what was better to me—their loving-kindness and sympathy."

"You'd bring down the house if you said that in the Adelphi, Tony."

"It's well for you that I can't get out of bed," said Tony, with a grim laugh.

"There it is again—another appeal to the brute man and the man brute! Well, I'll go to dinner, and I'll tell the fair Sister to prepare your barley-water, and administer it in a more diluted form than heretofore;" and, adjusting his hat so as to display a favourite lock to the best advantage, and drawing on his gloves in leisurely fashion, Skeff Damer walked proudly away, bestowing little benevolent gestures on the patients as he passed, and intimating by certain little signs that he had taken an interest in their several cases, and saying, by a sweet smile, "You'll be the better of this visit of mine. You'll see, you will."

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE 6TH OF SEPTEMBER.

On the evening of the 6th of September a corvette steamed rapidly out of the Bay of Naples, threading her way deviously through the other ships of war, unacknowledged by salute—not even an ensign dipped as she passed.

"There goes the King and the monarchy," said Skeff, as he stood on the balcony with the Lyles, and pointed to the fast-retreating vessel.

"I suppose the sooner *we* leave the better," said Lady Lyle, whose interest in political affairs was very inferior to that she felt on personal matters.

"Skeff says that the *Talisman* will take us on board," said Sir Arthur.

"Yes," said Skeff; "Captain Paynter will be here by-and-by to take your orders, and know when he is to send in his boats for you; and though I feel assured my general directions will be carried out here, and that no public disturbance will take place, you will all be safer under the Union Jack."

"And what of Tony Butler? when is he to arrive?" asked Bella.

"Tony," said Skeff, "is to arrive here to-night. I have had a note from his friend M'Gruder, who has gone down to meet him, and is now at Salerno."

"And who is his friend M'Gruder?" asked Lady Lyle, superciliously.

"A rag-merchant from Leghorn," said Skeff; "but Tony calls him an out-and-out good fellow; and I must say he didn't take five minutes to decide when I told him Tony was coming up from Cava, and would be glad to have his company on the road."

"These are of course exceptional times, when all sorts of strange intimacies will be formed; but I *do* hope that Tony will see that his altered circumstances as to fortune require from

him more care in the selection of his friends than he has hitherto been distinguished for."

"Don't trouble yourself about that, my dear," said Sir Arthur; "a man's fortune very soon impresses itself on all he says and does."

"I mistake him much," said Bella, "if any wealth will estrange him from one of those he cared for in his humbler days. Don't you agree with me, Alice?"

Alice made no reply, but continued to gaze at the ships through a glass.

"The danger is that he'll carry that feeling to excess," said Skeff; "for he will not alone hold to all these people, but he'll make you and me hold to them too."

"That would be impossible, perfectly impossible," said my lady, with a haughty toss of her head.

"No, no; I cannot agree to go that far," chimed in Sir Arthur.

"It strikes me," said Alice, quietly, "we are all of us deciding a little too hastily as to what Tony Butler will or will not do. Probably a very slight exercise of patience would save us some trouble."

"Certainly not, Alice, after what Mr. Damer has said. Tony would seem to have thrown down a sort of defiance to us all. We must accept him with his belongings, or do without him."

"He shall have *me* on his own terms," said Skeffy. "He is a noble savage, and I love him with all my heart."

"And you will know his rag friend?" asked Lady Lyle.

"Ay, that will I; and an Irish creature too, that he calls Rory—a fellow of six feet four, with a voice like an enraged bull and a hand as wide as one of these flags!"

"It is Damon and Pythias over again, I declare!" said Lady Lyle. "Where did he pick up his monster?"

"They met by chance in England, and, equally by chance, came together to Italy, and Tony persuaded him to accompany him and join Garibaldi. The worthy Irishman, who loved fighting and was not very particular as to the cause, agreed; and though he had originally come abroad to serve in the Pope's army, some offence they had given him made him desert, and he was well pleased not to return home without, as he said, 'batin' somebody.' It was in this way he became a Garibaldian. The fellow, it seems, fought like a lion; he has been five times wounded, and was left for dead on the field; but he bears a charm which he knows will always protect him."

"A charm—what is the charm?"

"A medallion of the Pope, which he wears around his neck, and always kisses devoutly before he goes into battle."

"The Pope's image is a strange emblem for a Garibaldian, surely," said Sir Arthur, laughing.

"Master Rory thinks it will dignify any cause; and as he never knew what or for whom he was fighting, this small bit of copper saved him a world of trouble and casuistry; and so in the name of the Holy Father he has broken no end of Neapolitan skulls."

"I must say Mr. Butler has surrounded himself with some choice associates," said Lady Lyle; "and all this time I have been encouraging myself to believe that so very young a man would have had no connections, no social relations, he could not throw off without difficulty."

"The world will do all his sifting process for him, if we only have patience," said Sir Arthur; and indeed it is but fair to say that he spoke with knowledge, since, in his own progress through life, he had already made the acquaintance of four distinct and separate classes in society, and abandoned each in turn for that above it.

"Was he much elated, Mr. Damer," asked Lady Lyle, "when he heard of his good fortune?"

"I think he was at first; but it made so little impression on him, that more than once he went on to speculate on his future, quite forgetting that he had become independent; and then, when he remembered it, he certainly did look very happy and cheerful."

"And what sort of plans has he?" asked Bella.

"They're all about his mother; everything is for *her*. She is to keep that cottage, and the ground about it, and he is to make a garden for her; and it seems she likes cows—she is to have cows. It's a lucky chance that the old lady hadn't a taste for a plesiosaurus, or he'd be offering a prize for one to-morrow."

"He's a dear good fellow, as he always was," said Bella.

"The only real change I see in him," said Skeffy, "is that now he is never grumpy—he takes everything well; and if crossed for a moment, he says, 'Give me a weed; I must smoke away that annoyance.'"

"How sensual!" said my lady; but nobody heeded the remark.

At the moment, too, a young midshipman saluted Damer from the street, and informed him that the first cutter was at the jetty to take the party off to the *Talisman;* and Captain Paynter advised them not to delay very long, as the night looked threaten-

ing. Lady Lyle needed no stronger admonition; she declared that she would go at once; and although the Captain's own gig, as an attention of honour, was to be in to take her, she would not wait, but set out immediately.

"You'll take care of me, Skeffy," said Alice, "for I have two letters to write, and shall not be ready before eleven o'clock."

For a while all was bustle and confusion. Lady Lyle could not make up her mind whether she would finally accept the frigate as a refuge or come on shore again the next day. There were perils by land and by water, and she weighed them and discussed them, and turned fiercely on everybody who agreed with her, and quarrelled with all round. Sir Arthur, too, had his scruples, as he bethought him of the effect that would be produced by the fact that a man of his station and importance had sought the protection of a ship of war; and he asked Skeffy if some sort of brief protest—some explanation—should not be made in the public papers, to show that he had taken the step in compliance with female fears, and not from the dictates of his own male wisdom. "I should be sorry, sincerely sorry, to affect the Funds," said he; and really the remark was considerate.

As for Bella, she could not bear being separated from Skeffy; he was so daring, so impulsive, as she said, and with all this responsibility on him now—people coming to him for everything, and all asking what was to be done—he needed more than ever support and sympathy.

And thus is it the world goes on, as unreal, as fictitious, as visionary as anything there ever was put on the stage and illuminated by foot-lights. There was a rude realism outside in the street, however, that compensated for much of this. There, all was wildest fun and jollity; not the commotion of a people in the throes of a revolution, not the highly-wrought passion of an excited populace mad with triumph; it was the orgie of a people who deemed the downfall of a hated government a sort of carnival occasion, and felt that mummery and tomfoolery were the most appropriate expressions of delight.

Through streets crowded with this dancing, singing, laughing, embracing, and mimicking mass, the Lyles made their way to the jetty reserved for the use of the ships of war, and soon took their places, and were rowed off to the frigate, Skeffy waving his adieux till darkness rendered his gallantry unnoticed.

All his late devotion to the cares of love and friendship had made such inroads on his time that he scarcely knew what was occurring, and had lamentably failed to report to "the Office" the various steps by which revolution had advanced,

and was already all but installed as master of the kingdom. Determined to write off a most telling despatch, he entered the hotel, and, seeing Alice engaged letter-writing at one table; he quietly installed himself at another, merely saying, "The boat will be back by midnight, and I have just time to send off an important despatch."

Alice looked up from her writing, and a very faint smile curled her lip. She did not speak, however, and after a moment continued her letter.

For upwards of half an hour the scraping sounds of the pens were the only noises in the room, except at times a low murmur as Skeff read over to himself some passage of unusual force and brilliancy.

"You must surely be doing something very effective, Skeff," said Alice, from the other end of the room, "for you rubbed your hands with delight, and looked radiant with triumph."

"I think I have given it to them!" cried he. "There's not another man in the line would send home such a despatch. Canning wouldn't have done it in the old days, when he used to bully them. Shall I read it for you?"

"My dear Skeff, I'm not Bella. I never had a head for questions of politics. I am hopelessly stupid in all such matters."

"Ah, yes: Bella told me that. Bella herself, indeed, only learned to feel an interest in them through me; but, as I told her, the woman who would one day be an ambassadress cannot afford to be ignorant of the great European game in which her husband is a player."

"Quite true: but I have no such ambitions before me; and fortunate it is, for really I could not rise to the height of such lofty themes."

Skeff smiled pleasantly; her humility soothed him. He turned to the last paragraph he had penned and re-read it.

"By the way," said Alice, carelessly, and certainly nothing was less apropos to what they had been saying, though she commenced thus—"By the way, how did you find Tony looking—improved, or the reverse?"

"Improved in one respect; fuller, browner, more manly, perhaps; but coarser; he wants the—you know what I mean—he wants this!" and he swayed his arm in a bold sweep, and stood fixed, with his hand extended.

"Ah, indeed!" said she, faintly.

"Don't you think so—don't you agree with me, Alice?"

"Perhaps to a certain extent I do," said she, diffidently.

"How could it be otherwise, consorting with such a set? You'd not expect to find it there?"

Alice nodded assent all the more readily that she had not the vaguest conception of what "it" might mean.

"The fact is, Alice," said he, arising and walking the room with immense strides, "Tony will always be Tony!"

"I suppose he will," said she, dryly.

"Yes; but you don't follow me. You don't appreciate my meaning. I desired to convey this opinion, that Tony being one of those men who cannot add to their own natures the gifts and graces which a man acquires who has his successes with your sex——"

"Come, come, Skeff, you must neither be metaphysical nor improper. Tony is a very fine boy; only a boy, I acknowledge, but he has noble qualities; and every year he lives will, I feel certain, but develop them further."

"He won't stand the 'boy' tone any longer," said Skeff, dryly. "I tried it, and he was down on me at once."

"What did he say when you told him we were here?" said she, carelessly, while putting her papers in order.

"He was surprised."

"Was he pleased?"

"Oh, yes, pleased, certainly; he was rather afraid of meeting your mother, though."

"Afraid of mamma! how could that be?"

"Some lesson or other she once gave him sticks in his throat; something she said about presumption, I think."

"Oh no, no; this is quite impossible—I can't credit it."

"Well, it might be some fancy of his—for he has fancies, and very queer ones, too. One was about a godfather of mine. Come in—what is it?" cried he, as a knock came to the door.

"A soldier below stairs, sir, wishes to speak to you," said the waiter.

"Ah! something of importance from Filangieri, I've no doubt," said Skeff, rising and leaving the room. Before he had gone many paces, however, he saw a large, powerful figure in the red shirt and small cap of the Garibaldians, standing in the corridor, and the next instant he turned fully round—it was Tony.

"My dear Tony, when did you arrive?"

"This moment; I am off again, however, at once, but I wouldn't leave without seeing you."

"Off, and where to?"

"Home—I've taken a passage to Marseilles in the Messageries

boat, and she sails at two o'clock. You see I was no use here till this arm got right, and the General thought my head wouldn't be the worse of a little quiet; so I'll go back and recruit, and if they want me they shall have me."

"You don't know who's there?" whispered Skeff. Tony shook his head. "And all alone too," added the other, still lower. "Alice—Alice Trafford."

Tony grew suddenly very pale, and leaned against the wall.

"Come in; come in at once, and see her. We have been talking of you all the evening."

"No, no—not now," said Tony, faintly.

"And when, if not now? You're going off you said."

"I'm in no trim to pay visits; besides, I don't wish it. I'll tell you more some other time."

"Nonsense; you look right well in your brigand costume, and with an old friend, not to say—— Well, well, don't look sulky," and as he got thus far—he had been gradually edging closer and closer to the door—he flung it wide open, and called out, "Mr. Tony Butler!" Pushing Tony inside, and then closing the door behind, he retreated, laughing heartily to himself over his practical joke.

CHAPTER LIX.

AN AWKWARD MOMENT.

ALICE started as she heard the name Tony Butler, and for a moment neither spoke. There was confusion and awkwardness on either side—all the greater that each saw it in the other. She, however, was the first to rally; and, with a semblance of old friendship, held out her hand, and said, "I am so glad to see you, Tony, and to see you safe."

"I'd not have dared to present myself in such a dress," stammered he out; "but that scamp Skeffy gave me no choice: he opened the door and pushed me in."

"Your dress is quite good enough to visit an old friend in. Won't you sit down?—sit here." As she spoke she seated herself on an ottoman, and pointed to a place at her side. "I am longing to hear something about your campaigns. Skeff was so provoking—he only told us about what he saw at Cava, and his own adventures on the road."

"I have very little to tell, and less time to tell it. I must embark in about half an hour."

"And where for?"

"For home."

"So that if it had not been for Skeff's indiscretion, I should not have seen you?" said she, coldly.

"Not at this moment—not in this guise."

"Indeed!" And there was another pause.

"I hope Bella is better. Has she quite recovered?" asked he.

"She is quite well again; she'll be sorry to have missed you, Tony. She wanted, besides, to tell you how happy it made her to hear of all your good fortune."

"My good fortune! Oh, yes!—to be sure. It was so unlooked for," added he, with a faint smile, "that I have hardly been able to realize it yet—that is, I find myself planning half-a-dozen ways to earn my bread, when I suddenly remember that I shall not need them."

"And I hope it makes you happy, Tony?"

"Of course it does. It enables me to make my mother happy, and to secure that we shall not be separated. As for myself alone, my habits are simple enough, and my tastes also. My difficulty will be, I suppose, to acquire more expensive ones."

"It is not a very hard task, I believe," said she, smiling.

"Not for others, perhaps; but I was reared in narrow fortune, Alice, trained to submit to many a privation, and told too—I'm not sure very wisely—that such hardships are all the more easily borne by a man of good blood and lineage. Perhaps I did not read my lesson right. At all events, I thought a deal more of my good blood than other people were willing to accord it; and the result was, it misled me."

"Misled you! and how—in what way?"

"Is it you who ask me this—you, Alice, who have read me such wise lessons on self-dependence, while Lady Lyle tried to finish my education by showing the evils of over-presumption; and you were both right, though I didn't see it at the time."

"I declare I do not understand you, Tony!" said she.

"Well, I'll try to be clearer," said he, with more animation. "From the first day I knew you, Alice, I loved you. I need not say that all the difference in station between us never affected my love. You were too far above me in every gift and grace to make rank, mere rank, ever occur to my mind, though others were good enough to jog my memory on the subject."

"Others! of whom are you speaking?"

"Your brother Mark, for one; but I don't want to think of these things. I loved you, I say; and to that degree, that every change of your manner towards me made the joy or the misery of my life. This was when I was an idle youth, lounging about in that condition of half dependence that, as I look back on, I blush to think I ever could have endured. My only excuse is, however, that I knew no better."

"There was nothing unbecoming in what you did."

"Yes there was, though. There was this: I was satisfied to hold an ambiguous position—to be a something, neither master nor servant, in another man's house, all because it gave me the daily happiness to be near you, and to see you, and to hear your voice. That was unbecoming, and the best proof of it was, that with all my love and all my devotion, you could not care for me."

"Oh, Tony! do not say that."

"When I say care, you could not do more than care; you couldn't love me."

"Were you not always as a dear brother to me?"

"I wanted to be more than brother, and when I found that this could not be, I grew very careless, almost reckless, of my life; not but that it took a long time to teach me the full lesson. I had to think over, not only all that separated us in station, but all that estranged us in tone of mind; and I saw that your superiority to me chafed me, and that if you should ever come to feel for me, it would be through some sense of pity."

"Oh, Tony!"

"Yes, Alice, you know it better than I can say it; and so I set my pride to fight against my love, with no great success at first. But as I lay wounded in the orchard at Melazzo, and thought of my poor mother, and her sorrow if she were to hear of my death, and compared her grief with what yours would be, I saw what was real in love, and what was mere interest; and I remember I took out my two relics—the dearest objects I had in the world—a lock of my mother's hair and a certain glove—a white glove you may have seen once on a time; and it was over the little braid of brown hair I let fall the last tears I thought ever to shed in life; and here is the glove—I give it back to you. Will you have it?"

She took it with a trembling hand; and in a voice of weak but steady utterance said, "I told you that this time would come."

"You did so," said he, gloomily.

Alice rose and walked out upon the balcony; and after a moment Tony followed her. They leaned on the balustrade side by side, but neither spoke.

"But we shall always be dear friends, Tony, shan't we?" said she, while she laid her hand gently over his.

"Oh, Alice," said he, plaintively, "do not—do not, I beseech you—lead me back again into that land of delusion I have just tried to escape from. If you knew how I loved you—if you knew what it costs me to tear that love out of my heart—you'd never wish to make the agony greater to me."

"Dear Tony, it was a mere boyish passion. Remember for a moment how it began. I was older than you—much older as regards life and the world—and even older by more than a year. You were so proud to attach yourself to a grown woman—you a mere lad; and then your love—for I will grant it was love—dignified you to yourself. It made you more daring where there was danger, and it taught you to be gentler and kinder, and more considerate to every one. All your good and great

qualities grew the faster that they had those little vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, the sun and rain of our daily lives; but all that is not love."

"You mean there is no love where there is no return of love?"

She was silent.

"If so, I deny it. The faintest flicker of a hope was enough for me—the merest shadow—a smile, a passing word—your mere 'Thank you, Tony,' as I held your stirrup—the little word of recognition you would give when I had done something that pleased you—these—any of them—would send me home happy—happier, perhaps, than I ever shall be again."

"No, Tony, do not believe that," said she, calmly; "not," added she, hastily, "that I can acquit myself of all wrong to you. No; I was in fault—gravely in fault. I ought to have seen what would have come of all our intimacy—I ought to have known that I could not develop all that was best in your nature without making you turn in gratitude—well, in love—to myself; but shall I tell you the truth? I over-estimated my power over you. I not only thought I could make you love, but unlove me; and I never thought what pain that lesson might cost—each of us."

"It would have been fairer to have cast me adrift at first," said he, fiercely.

"And yet, Tony, you will be generous enough one of these days to think differently!"

"I certainly feel no touch of that generosity now."

"Because you are angry with me, Tony—because you will not be just to me; but when you have learned to think of me as your sister, and can come and say, Dear Alice, counsel me as to this, advise me as to that—then, there will be no ill-will towards me for all I have done to teach you the great stores that were in your own nature."

"Such a day as that is distant," said he, gloomily.

"Who knows? The changes which work within us are not to be measured by time; a day of sorrow will do the work of years."

"There! that lantern at the peak is the signal for me to be off. The skipper promised to give me notice; but if you will say 'Stay!' be it so. No, no, Alice, do not lay your hand on my arm if you would not have me again deceive myself."

"You will write to me, Tony?"

He shook his head to imply the negative.

"Well, to Bella, at least?"

"I think not. I will not promise. Why should I? Is it to try and knot together the cords we have just torn, that you may break them again at your pleasure?"

"How ungenerous you are!"

"You reminded me a while ago it was my devotion to you that civilized me; is it not natural that I should go back to savagery as my allegiance was rejected?"

"You want to be Garibaldian in love as in war," said she, smiling.

The deep boom of a gun floated over the bay, and Tony started.

"That's the last signal—good-bye." He held out his hand.

"Good-bye, dear Tony," said she. She held her cheek towards him. He hesitated, blushed till his face was in a flame, then stooped and kissed her. Skeff's voice was heard at the instant at the door, and Tony rushed past him and down the stairs, and then, with mad speed, dashed along to the jetty, leaped into the boat, and, covering his face with his hands, never raised his head till they were alongside.

"You were within an inch of being late, Tony," cried M'Grnder, as he came up the side. "What detained you?"

"I'll tell you all another time—let me go below now;" and he disappeared down the ladder. The heavy paddles flapped slowly, then faster, and the great mass moved on, and made for the open sea.

CHAPTER LX.

A DECK WALK.

The steamer was well out to sea when Tony appeared on deck. It was a calm star-light night—fresh, but not cold. The few passengers, however, had sought their berths below, and the only one who lingered on deck was M'Gruder and one other, who, wrapped in a large boat-cloak, lay fast asleep beside the binnacle.

"I was thinking you had turned in," said M'Gruder to Tony, "as you had not come up."

"Give me a light—I want a smoke badly. I felt that something was wrong with me, though I didn't know what it was. Is this Rory here?"

"Yes, sound asleep, poor fellow."

"I'll wager a trifle he has a lighter heart than either of us, Sam."

"It might easy be lighter than mine," sighed M'Gruder, heavily.

Tony sighed too, but said nothing, and they walked along side by side, with that short jerking stride men pace a deck with, feeling some sort of companionship, although no words were exchanged between them.

"You were nigh being late," said M'Gruder at last. "What detained you on shore?"

"I saw her!" said Tony, in a low muffled voice.

"You saw her! Why, you told me you were determined not to see her."

"So I was, and so I intended. It came about by mere accident. That strange fellow, Skeffy, you've heard me speak of—he pushed me plump into the room where she was, and there was nothing to be done but to speak to her."

"Well?"

"Well! I spoke," said he, half-gruffly; and then, as if correcting the roughness of his tone, added, "it was just as I said it would be; just as I told you. She liked me well enough as a brother, but never thought of me as anything else. All the

interest she had taken in me was out of friendship. She didn't say this haughtily, not a bit; she felt herself much older than me, she said; that she felt herself better was like enough, but she never hinted it, but she let me feel pretty plainly that we were not made for each other; and though the lesson wasn't much to my liking, I began to see it was true."

"Did you really?"

"I did," said he, with a deep sigh. "I saw that all the love I had borne her was only paid back in a sort of feeling half-compassionately, half-kindly—that her interest in me was out of some desire to make something out of me; I mean, to force me to exert myself and do something—anything besides living a hanger-on at a great house. I have a notion, too—Heaven knows if there's anything in it—but I've a notion, Sam, if she had never known me till now—if she had never seen me idling and lounging about in that ambiguous position I held—something between gamekeeper and reduced gentleman—that I might have had a better chance."

M'Gruder nodded a half-assent, and Tony continued, "I'll tell you why I think so. Whenever she asked me about the campaign and the way I was wounded, and what I had seen, there was quite a change in her voice, and she listened to what I said very differently from the way she heard me when I talked to her of my affection for her."

"There's no knowing them! there's no knowing them!" said M'Gruder, drearily; "and how did it end?"

"It ended that way."

"What way?"

"Just as I told you. She said she'd always be the same as a sister to me, and that when I grew older and wiser I'd see that there should never have been any closer tie between us. I can't repeat the words she used, but it was something to this purport—that when a woman has been lecturing a man about his line of life, and trying to make something out of him, against the grain of his own indolence, she can't turn suddenly round and fall in love, even though *he* was in love with *her*."

"She has a good head on her shoulders, she has," muttered M'Gruder.

"I'd rather she had a little more heart," said Tony, peevishly.

"That may be, but she's right, after all."

"And why is she right? why shouldn't she see me as I am now, and not persist in looking at me as I used to be?"

"Just because it's not her humour, I suppose; at least, I don't know any better reason."

Tony wheeled suddenly away from his companion, and took two or three turns alone. At last he said, "She never told me so, but I suppose the truth was, all this time she *did* think me very presumptuous; and that what her mother did not scruple to say to me in words, Alice had often said to her own heart."

"You are rich enough now to make you her equal."

"And I'd rather be as poor as I used to be and have the hopes that have left me."

M'Gruder gave a heavy sigh, and, turning away, leaned on the bulwark and hid his face. "I'm a bad comforter, Tony," said he at last, and speaking with difficulty. "I didn't mean to have told you, for you have cares enough of your own, but I may as well tell you—read that." As he spoke he drew out a letter and handed it to him; and Tony, stooping down beside the binnacle light read it over twice.

"This is clear and clean beyond me," exclaimed he, as he stood up. "From any other girl I could understand it; but Dolly—Dolly Stewart, who never broke her word in her life—I never knew her tell a lie as a little child. What can she mean by it?"

"Just what she says—there—she thought she could marry me, and she finds she cannot."

"But why?"

"Ah! that's more than she likes to tell me—more, mayhap, than she'd tell any one."

"Have you any clue to it?"

"None—not the slightest."

"Is your sister-in-law in it? Has she said or written anything that Dolly could resent?"

"No; don't you mark what she says at the end? 'You must not try to lighten any blame you would lay on me by thinking that any one has influenced me. The fault is all my own. It is I myself have to ask your forgiveness.'"

"Was there any coldness in your late letters? was there anything that she could construe into change of affection?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"What will her father say to it?" said Tony, after a pause.

"She's afraid of that herself. You mind the words?—'If I meet forgiveness from you I shall not from others, and my fault will bear its heavy punishment on a heart that is not too happy.' Poor thing! I do forgive her—forgive her with all my heart; but it's a great blow, Tony."

"If she was a capricious girl, I could understand it, but that's what she never was."

"No, no; she was true and honest in all things."

"It may be something about her father; he's an old man, and failing. She cannot bear to leave him, perhaps, and it's just possible she couldn't bring herself to say it. Don't you think it might be that?"

"Don't give me a hope, Tony. Don't let me see a glimpse of light, my dear friend, if there's to be no fulfilment after."

The tone of emotion he spoke in made Tony unable to reply for some minutes. "I have no right to say this, it is true," said he, kindly; "but it's the nearest guess I can make: I know, for she told me so herself, she'd not go and be a governess again if she could help it."

"Oh, if you were to be right, Tony! Oh, if it was to be as you suspect, for we could make him come out and live with us here! We've plenty of room, and it would be a pleasure to see him happy, and at rest, after his long life of labour. Let us read the letter over together, Tony, and see how it agrees with that thought:" and now they both crouched down beside the light and read it over from end to end. Here and there were passages that they pondered over seriously, and some they read twice and even thrice; and although they brought to this task the desire to confirm a speculation, there was that in the tone of the letter that gave little ground for their hope. It was so self-accusing throughout, that it was plain she herself laid no comfort to her own heart in the thought of a high duty fulfilled.

"Are you of the same mind still?" asked M'Gruder, sadly, and with little of hopefulness in his voice; and Tony was silent.

"I see you are not. I see that you cannot give me such a hope."

"Have you answered this yet?"

"Yes, I have written it; but it's not sent off. I kept it by me to read over, and see that there was nothing harsh or cruel —nothing I would not say in cold blood; for oh, Tony! I will avow it was hard to forgive her; no, I don't mean that, but it was hard to bring myself to believe I had lost her for ever. For a while I thought the best thing I could do was to comfort myself by thinking how false she was, and I took out all her letters, to convince me of her duplicity; but what do you think I found? They all showed me, what I never saw till then, that she was only going to be my wife out of a sort of resignation; that the grief and fretting of her poor father at leaving her penniless in the world was more than she could bear; and that

to give him the comfort of his last few days in peace, she'd make any sacrifice; and through all the letters, though I never saw it before, she laid stress on what she called doing her best to make me happy, but there was no word of being happy herself."

Perhaps Tony did not lay the same stress on this that his friend did; perhaps no explanation of it came readily to his mind; at all events, he made no attempt at comment, and only said,—

"And what will your answer be?"

"What can it be?—to release her, of course."

"Ay, but how will you say it?"

"Here's what I have written; it is the fourth attempt, and I don't much like it yet, but I can't do it better." And once more they turned to the light while M'Gruder read out his letter. It was a kind and feeling letter; it contained not one word of reproach, but it said that, into the home he had taken, and where he meant to be so happy, he'd never put foot again. "You ought to have seen it, Tony," said he, with a quiver in his voice. "It was all so neat and comfortable; and the little room I meant to be Dolly's own was hung round with prints, and there was a little terrace, with some orange-trees and myrtles, that would grow there all through the winter—for it was a sheltered spot under the Monte Nero; but it's all over now."

"Don't send off that letter. I mean, let me see her and speak to her before you write. I shall be at home, I hope, by Wednesday, and I'll go over to the Burnside—or, better still, I'll make my mother ask Dolly to come over to us. Dolly loves her as if she were her own mother, and if any one can influence her she will be that one."

"But I'd not wish her to come round by persuasion, Tony. Dolly's a girl to have a will of her own, and she's never made up her mind to write me that letter without thinking well over it."

"Perhaps she'll tell my mother her reasons. Perhaps she'll say why she draws back from her promise."

"I don't even know that I'd like to drive her to that; it mightn't be quite fair."

Tony flung away his cigar with impatience; he was irritated, for he bethought him of his own case, and how it was quite possible that no such scruples of delicacy would have interfered with him if he could only have managed to find out what was passing in Alice's mind.

"I'm sure," said M'Gruder, "you agree with me, Tony; and

if she says, 'Don't hold me to my pledge,' I have no right to ask why?"

A short shrug of the shoulders was all Tony's answer.

"Not that I'd object to your saying a word for me, Tony, if there was to be any hope from it—saying what a warm friend could say of one he thought well of. You've been living under the same roof with me, and you know more of my nature, and my ways and my temper, than most men, and mayhap what you could tell her might have its weight."

"That I know and believe."

"But don't think only of me, Tony. *She's* more to be considered than I am; and if this bargain was to be unhappy for her, it would only be misery for both of us. You'd not marry your own sweetheart against her own will?"

Tony neither agreed to nor dissented from this remark. The chances were that it was a proposition not so readily solved, and that he'd like to have thought over it.

"No; I know you better than that," said M'Gruder once more.

"Perhaps not," remarked Tony; but the tone certainly gave no positive assurance of a settled determination. "At all events, I'll see what I can do for you."

"If it was that she cares for somebody else that she couldn't marry—that her father disliked, or that he was too poor—I'd never say one word; because who can tell what changes may come in life, and the man that couldn't support a wife now, in a year or two may be well off and thriving? And if it was that she really liked another—you don't think that likely? Well, neither do I; but I say it here because I want to take in every consideration of the question; but I repeat, if it were so, I'd never utter one word against it. Your mother, Tony, is more likely to find *that* out than any of us; and if she says Dolly's heart is given away already, that will be enough. I'll not trouble nor torment her more."

Tony grasped his friend's hand and shook it warmly, some vague suspicion darting through him at the time that this rag-merchant was more generous in his dealing with the woman he loved than he, Tony, would have been. Was it that he loved less, or was it that his love was more? Tony couldn't tell; nor was it so very easy to resolve it either way.

As day broke, the steamer ran into Leghorn to land some passengers and take in others; and M'Gruder, while he took leave of Tony, pointed to a red-tiled roof rising amongst some olive-trees—the quaint little pigeon-house on top surmounted with a weather-vane fashioned into an enormous letter S.

"There it is," said he, with a shake in his voice; "that was to have been her home. I'll not go near it till I hear from you, and you may tell her so. Tell her you saw it, Tony, and that it was a sweet little spot, where one might look for happiness if they could only bring a quiet heart to it. And above all, Tony, write to me frankly and openly, and don't give me any hopes if your own conscience tells you I have no right to them."

With a strong grasp of the hand, and a long full look at each other in silence, M'Gruder went over the side to his boat, and the steamer ploughed on her way to Marseilles.

CHAPTER LXI.

TONY AT HOME AGAIN.

Though Tony was eager to persuade Rory to accompany him home, the poor fellow longed so ardently to see his friends and relations, to tell all that he had done and suffered for "the cause," and to show the rank he had won, that Tony yielded at last, and only bound him by a promise to come and pass his Christmas at the Causeway; and now he hastened on night and day, feverishly impatient to see his mother, and yearning for that affection which his heart had never before so thirsted after.

There were times when he felt that, without Alice, all his good fortune in life was valueless; and it was a matter of utter indifference whether he was to see himself surrounded with every means of enjoyment, or rise each morning to meet some call of labour. And then there were times when he thought of the great space that separated them—not in condition, but in tastes and habits and requirements. She was of that gay and fashionable world that she adorned—made for it, and made to like it; its admiration and its homage were things she looked for. What would he have done if obliged to live in such a society? His delight was the freedom of an out-of-door existence—the hard work of field-sports, dashed with a certain danger that gave them their zest. In these he admitted no man to be his superior; and in this very conscious strength lay the pride that sustained him. Compel him, however, to live in another fashion—surround him with the responsibilities of station, and the demands of certain ceremonies—and he would be wretched. "Perhaps she saw all that," muttered he to himself. "With that marvellous quickness of hers, who knows if she might not have foreseen how unsuited I was to all habits but my own wayward careless ones? And though I hope I shall always be a gentleman, in truth there are some forms of the condition that puzzle me sorely."

"And, after all, have I not my dear mother to look after and make happy? and what a charm it will give to life to see her

surrounded with the little objects she loved and cared for! What a garden she shall have!" Climate and soil, to be sure, were stiff adversaries to conquer, but money and skill could fight them; and that school for the little girls—the fishermen's daughters—that she was always planning, and always wondering Sir Arthur Lyle had never thought of, she should have it now, and a pretty building, too, it should be. He knew the very spot to suit it, and how beautiful he would make their own little cottage, if his mother should still desire to live there. Not that he thought of this positively with perfect calm and indifference. To live so near the Lyles, and live estranged from them, would be a great source of unpleasantness, and yet how could he possibly renew his relations there, now that all was over between Alice and himself? "Ah," thought he, at last, "the world would stand still if it had to wait for stupid fellows like me to solve its difficulties. I must just let events happen, and do the best I can when they confront me:" and then mother would be there; mother would counsel and advise him; mother would warn him of this, and reconcile him to that; and so he was of good cheer as to the future, though there were things in the present that pressed him sorely.

It was about an hour after dark of a starry, sharp October evening, that the jaunting-car on which he travelled drove up to the spot where the little pathway turned off to the cottage, and Jeanie was there with her lantern waiting for him.

"You've no a' that luggage, Maister Tony?" cried she, as the man deposited the fourth trunk on the road.

"How's my mother?" asked he, impatiently—"is she well?"

"Why wouldn't she be weel, and hearty too?" said the girl, who rather felt the question as savouring of ingratitude, seeing what blessings of fortune had been showered upon them.

As he walked hurriedly along, Jeanie trotted at his side, telling him, in broken and disjointed sentences, the events of the place—the joy of the whole neighbourhood on hearing of his new wealth; their hopes that he might not leave that part of the country; what Mrs. Blackie of Craigs Mills said at Mrs. Dumphy's christening, when she gave the name of Tony to the baby, and wouldn't say Anthony; and how Dr. M'Candlish improved the occasion for "twa good hours, wi' mair text o' Scripture than wad make a Sabbath-day's discourse; and ech, Maister Tony, it's a glad heart I'll hae o' it all, if I could only think that you'll no be going to keep a man creature—a sort of a butler like—there's no such wastefu' bodies in the world as they, and wanting mair ceremonies than the best gentleman in

the land." Before Tony had finished assuring her that no change in the household should displace herself, they had reached the little wicket; his mother, as she stood at the door, caught the sound of his voice, rushed out to meet him, and was soon clasped in his arms.

"It's more happiness than I hoped for—more, far more," was all she could say, as she clung to him. Her next words were uttered in a cry of joy, when the light fell full upon him in the doorway—"you're just your father, Tony; it's your own father's self I see standing before me, if you had not so much hair over your face."

"I'll soon get rid of that, mother, if you dislike it."

"Let it be, Master Tony—let it be," cried Jeanie; "though it frightened me a bit at first, it's no so bad when one gets used to it."

Though Mrs. Butler had determined to make Tony relate every event that took place from the day he left her, in regular narrative order, nothing could be less connected, nothing less consecutive, than the incidents he recounted. Now it would be some reminiscence of his messenger days—of his meeting with that glorious Sir Joseph, who treated him so handsomely; then of that villain who stole his despatches; of his life as a rag-merchant, or his days with Garibaldi. Rory, too, was remembered; and he related to his mother the pious fraud by which he had transferred to his humble follower the promotion Garibaldi had bestowed upon himself.

"He well deserved it, and more; he carried me, when I was wounded, through the orchard at Melazzo on his back, and though struck with a bullet himself, never owned he was hit till he fell on the grass beside me—a grand fellow that, mother, though he never learned to read." And there was a something of irony in his voice as he said this, that showed how the pains of learning still rankled in his mind.

"And you never met the Lyles? how strange!" exclaimed she.

"Yes, I met Alice; at least," said he, stooping down to settle the log on the fire, "I saw her the last evening I was at Naples."

"Tell me all about it."

"There's no all. I met her, we talked together for half an hour or so, and we parted; there's the whole of it."

"She had heard, I suppose, of your good fortune?"

"Yes, Skeff had told them the story, and, I take it, made the most of our wealth; not that rich people like the Lyles would be much impressed by our fortune."

"That may be true, Tony, but rich folk have a sympathy with other rich folk, and they're not very wrong in liking those whose condition resembles their own. What did Alice say? Did she give you some good advice as to your mode of life?"

"Yes, plenty of that; she rather likes advice-giving."

"She was always a good friend of yours, Tony. I mind well when she used to come here to hear your letters read to her. She ever made the same remark: 'Tony is a fine true-hearted boy; and when he's moulded and shaped a bit by the pressure of the world, he'll grow to be a fine true-hearted man.'"

"It was very gracious of her, no doubt," said he, with a sharp short tone; "and she was good enough to contribute a little to that self-same 'pressure' she hoped so much from."

His mother looked at him to explain his words, but he turned his head away and was silent.

"Tell me something about home, mother. How are the Stewarts? Where is Dolly?"

"They are well, and Dolly is here; and a dear good girl she is. Ah, Tony! if you knew all the comfort she has been to me in your absence—coming here through sleet and snow and storm, and nursing me like a daughter."

"I liked her better till I learned how she had treated that good-hearted fellow Sam M'Gruder. Do you know how she has behaved to him?"

"I know it all. I read her letters, every one of them."

"And can you mean that you defend her conduct?"

"I mean that if she were to marry a man she did not love, and were dishonest enough not to tell him so, I'd not attempt to defend her. There's what I mean, Tony."

"Why promise him, then—why accept him?"

"She never did."

"Ah!" exclaimed he, holding up both his hands.

"I know what I say, Tony. It was the doctor answered the letter in which Mr. M'Gruder proposed for Dolly. He said that he could not, would not, use any influence over his daughter; but that, from all he had learned of Mr. M'Gruder's character, he would give his free consent to the match."

"Well, then, Dolly said——"

"Wait a bit, I am coming to Dolly. She wrote back that she was sorry he had not first written to herself, and she would frankly have declared that she did not wish to marry; but now, as he had addressed her father—an old man in failing health, anxious above all things about what was to become of

her when he was removed—the case was a more difficult one, since to refuse his offer was to place herself in opposition to her father's will—a thing that in all her life had never happened. 'You will see from this,' said she, 'that I could not bring to you that love and affection which would be your right, were I only to marry you to spare my father's anxieties. You ought to have more than this in your wife, and I cannot give you more; therefore do not persist in this suit, or, at all events, do not press it.'"

"But I remember your writing me word that Dolly was only waiting till I left M'Gruder's house, or quitted the neighbourhood, to name the day she would be married. How do you explain that?"

"It was her father forced her to write that letter: his health was failing, and his irritability had increased to that degree that at times we were almost afraid of his reason, Tony: and I mind well the night Dolly came over to show me what she had written. She read it in that chair where you are sitting now, and when she finished she fell on her knees, and, hiding her face in my lap, she sobbed as if her poor heart was breaking."

"So, in fact, she was always averse to this match?"

"Always. She never got a letter from abroad that I couldn't have told it by her red eyes and swelled eyelids, poor lassie!"

"I say 'poor fellow!' mother; for I declare that the man who marries a woman against her will has the worst of it."

"No, no, Tony; all sorrows fall heaviest on the helpless. When at last the time came that she could bear no more, she rallied her courage and told her father that if she were to marry M'Gruder it would be the misery of her whole life. He took it very ill at first; he said some very cruel things to her; and, indeed, it was only after seeing how I took the lassie's side, and approved of all she had done, that he yielded and gave way. But he isn't what he used to be, Tony. Old age, they say, makes people sometimes sterner and harder. A grievous thing to think of, that we'd be more worldly just when the world was slipping away beneath us: and so what do you think he does? The same day that Dolly writes that letter to M'Gruder, he makes her write to Dr. M'Candlish to say that she'd take a situation as a governess with a family going to India which the doctor mentioned was open to any well-qualified young person like herself. 'Ye canna say that your "heart will be broke wi' treachery" here, lassie,' said her

father, jeering at what she said in her tears about the marriage."

"You oughtn't to suffer this, mother; you ought to offer Dolly a home here with yourself."

"It was what I was thinking of, Tony; but I didn't like to take any step in it till I saw you and spoke to you."

"Do it, by all means—do it to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, Tony, nor even the next day; for Dolly and the doctor left this to pass a few days with the M'Candlishes at Articlave, and they'll not be back before Saturday; but I am so glad that you like the plan—so glad that it came from yourself, too."

"It's the first bit of pleasure our new wealth has given us, mother; may it be a good augury!"

"That's a heathenish word, Tony, and most unsuited to be used in thankfulness for God's blessings."

Tony took the rebuke in good part, and, to change the topic, laughingly asked if she thought Garibaldians never were hungry, for she had said nothing of supper since he came.

"Jeanie has been in three times to tell you it was ready, and the last time she said she'd come no more; but come, and we'll see what there's for us."

CHAPTER LXII.

SKEFF DAMER'S LAST "PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL."

After some four or five days passed almost like a dream—for while he stood in the midst of old familiar objects, all Tony's thoughts as to the future were new and strange—there came a long letter from Skeff Damer, announcing his approaching marriage with Bella—the "dear old woman of Tilney" having behaved "beautifully." "Short as the time has been since you left this, my brave Tony, great events have occurred. The King has lost his throne, and Skeff Damer has gained an estate. I would have saved him, for I really like the Queen; but that his obstinacy is such, the rescue would have only been a reprieve, not a pardon. Sicily I meant for us—I mean for England—myself to be the Viceroy. The silver mines at Stromboli have never been worked since the time of Tiberius; they contain untold wealth: and as to coral fishery, I have obtained statistics will make your teeth water. I can show you my calculations in hard figures, that in eight years and four months I should be the richest man in Europe—able to purchase the soil of the island out-and-out, it the British Government were stupid enough not to see that they ought to establish me and my dynasty there. These are now but visions—grand and glorious visions, it is true—and dearest Bella sheds tears when I allude to them.

"I have had a row with 'the Office;' they blame me for the downfall of the monarchy, but they never told me to save it. To you I may make the confession, it was the two days I passed at Cava cost this Bourbon his crown. Not that I regret, my dear Tony, this tribute to friendship. During that interval, as Caraffa expresses it, they were paralyzed. 'Where is Damer?' 'Who has seen Skeff?' 'What has become of him?' 'With whom is he negotiating?' were the questions on every side; and in the very midst of the excitement, back comes the fellow M'Caskey, the little fiery-faced individual you insisted in your raving on calling my 'godfather,' and declares that I am in the

camp of the Garibaldians, and making terms and stipulations with the General himself. The Queen-Mother went off in strong hysterics when she heard it; the King never uttered a word—has never spoken since—and the dear Queen merely said, 'Damer will never betray us.'

"These particulars I learned from Francardi. Meanwhile Garibaldi, seeing the immense importance of my presence at his head-quarters, pushes on for the capital, and enters Naples, as he gives out, with the concurrence and approval of England! You will, I have no doubt, hear another version of this event. You will be told bushels of lies about heroic daring and frantic popular enthusiasm. To your friendly breast I commit the truth, never to be revealed, however, except to a remote posterity.

"One other confession, and I have done—done with politics for ever. You will hear of Garibaldi as a brave, straightforward, simple-minded, unsuspectful man, hating intrigues of all kinds. This is totally wrong. With all his courage, it is as nothing to his craft. He is the deepest politician, and the most subtle statesman in Europe, and, to my thinking—mind, it is *my* estimate I give you—more of Machiavelli than any man of his day. Bear this in mind, and keep your eye on him in future. We had not been five minutes together till each of us had read the other. We were the two 'Augurs' of the Latin satirist, and if we didn't laugh, we exchanged a recognition just as significant. I ought to tell you that he is quite frantic at my giving up political life, and he says that my retirement will make Cavour's fortune, for there is no other man left fit to meet him. There was not a temptation, not a bribe, he did not throw out to induce me to withhold my resignation; and when he found that personal advantages had no weight with me, he said, 'Mind my words, Monsieur Damer; the day will come when you will regret this retirement. When you will see the great continent of Europe convulsed from one end to the other, and yourself no longer in the position to influence the course of events, and guide the popular will, you will bitterly regret this step.' But I know myself better. What could the Peerage, what could the Garter, what could a seat in the Cabinet do for me? I have been too long and too much behind the scenes to be dazzled by the blaze of the 'spectacle.' I want repose, a home, the charms of that domestic life which are denied to the mere man of ambition. Bella, indeed, has her misgivings, that to live without greatness—greatness in action, and greatness to come—will be a sore trial to me; but I tell her, as I tell you,

my dear friend, that it is exactly the men who, like myself, have moved events, and given the spring to the greatest casualties, who are readiest to accept tranquillity and peace as the first of blessings. Under the shade of my old elms at Tilney—I may call them mine already, as Reeves and Tucker are drawing out the deeds—I will write my memoirs—one of the most interesting contributions when it appears, that history has received for the last century. I can afford to be fearless, and I will be; and if certain noble lords go down to posterity with tarnished honour and diminished fame, they can date the discovery to the day when they disparaged a Damer.

"Now for a minor key. We led a very jolly life on board the *Talisman;* only needing yourself to make it perfect. My Lady L. was 'out of herself' at your not coming; indeed, since your accession to fortune, she has discovered some very amiable and some especially attractive qualities in your nature, and that if you fall amongst the right people'—I hope you appreciate the sort of accident intended—you will become a very superior article. Bella is, as always, a sincere friend; and though Alice says nothing, she does not look ungrateful to him who speaks well of you. Bella has told me in confidence—mind, in confidence—that all is broken off between Alice and you, and says it is all the better for both; that you were a pair of intractable tempers, and that the only chance for either of you is to be allied to somebody or something that would consent to think you perfection, and yet manage you as if you were not what is called 'absolute wisdom.'

"Bella also said, 'Tony might have had some chance with Alice had he remained poor,' the opposition of her family would have had its weight in influencing her in his favour; but now that he is a prize in the matrimonial lottery, she is quite ready to see any defects he may have, and set them against all that would be said in his behalf. Last of all, she likes her independence as a widow. I half suspected that Maitland had been before you in her favour; but Bella says not. By the way, it was the fortune that has fallen to you Maitland had always expected—Sir Omerod having married, or, as some say, not married, his mother, and adopted Maitland, who contrived to spend about eighty thousand of the old man's savings in ten or eleven years. He is a strange fellow, and mysterious to the last. Since the overthrow of the Government, we have been reduced to ask protection to the city from the secret society called the Camorra, a set of Neapolitan Thugs, who cut throats in reciprocity; and it was by a guard of these wretches that

we were escorted to the ship's boats when we embarked. Bella swears that the chief of the gang was no other than Maitland, greatly disguised, of course; but she says that she recognized him by his teeth as he smiled accidentally. It would be, of course, at the risk of his life he was there, since anything that pertained to the Court would, if discovered, be torn to fragments by the people. My 'godfather' had a narrow escape on Tuesday last. He rode through the Toledo in full uniform, amidst all the people, who were satisfied with hissing him instead of treating him to a stiletto, and the rascal grinned an insolent defiance as he went, and said, as he gained the Piazza, 'You're not such bad *canaille*, after all; I have seen worse in Mexico.' He went on board a despatch-boat in the bay, and ordered the commander to take him to Gaeta; and the oddest of all is, the officer complied, overpowered, as better men have been, by the scoundrel's impertinence. Oh, Tony, to *you*—to yourself, to your heart's most secret closet, fast to be locked, when you have my secret inside of it—to *you*, I own, that the night I passed in that wretch's company is the darkest page of my existence. He overwhelmed me with insult, and I had to bear it, just as I should have to bear the buffeting of the waves if I had been thrown into the sea. I'd have strangled him then and there if I was able, but the brute would have torn me limb from limb if I attempted it. Time may diminish the acuteness of this suffering, but I confess to you, up to this, when I think of what I went through, my humiliation overpowers me. I hope fervently you may meet him one of these days. You have a little score of your own, I suspect, to settle with him; at all events, if the day of reckoning comes, include my balance, and trust to my eternal gratitude.

"Here have come Alice and Bella to make me read out what I have written to you; of course I have objected. This is a 'strictly private and confidential.' What we do for the blue-books, Master Tony, we do in a different fashion. Alice, perhaps, suspects the reasons of my reserve—'appreciates my reticence,' as we say in the 'Line.'

"At all events, she tells me to make you write to her. 'When Tony,' said she, 'has found out that he was only in love with me because I made him better known to his own heart, and induced him to develop some of his own fine qualities, he'll begin to see that we may and ought to be excellent friends; and some day or other, when there shall be a Mrs. Tony, if she be a sensible woman, she'll not object to their friendship.' She said this so measuredly and calmly, that I can almost trust

myself to say I have reported her word for word. It reads to me like a very polite *congé*. What do you say to it?

"The Lyles are going back at the end of the month, but Alice says she'll winter at Cairo. There is an insolent independence about these widows, Tony, that adds one more terror to death. I protest I'd like to haunt the woman that could employ her freedom of action in this arbitrary manner.

"Dearest Bella insists on your coming to our wedding: it will come off at Tilney, strictly private. None but our nearest relatives, not even the Duke of Dullchester, nor any of the Howards. They will feel it; but it can't be helped, I suppose. Cincinnatus had to cut his connections too, when he took to horticulture. You, however, must not desert me; and if you cannot travel without Rory, bring him with you.

"I am impatient to get away from this, and seek the safety of some obscure retreat; for I know the persecution I shall be exposed to to withdraw my resignation and remain. To this I will never consent. I give it to you under my hand, Tony, and I give it the more formally, as I desire it may be historic. I know well the whining tone they will assume—just as well as if I saw it before me in a despatch. 'What are we to tell the Queen?' will be the cry. My dignified answer will be, 'Tell her that you made it impossible for one of the ablest of her servants to hold his office with dignity. Tell her, too, that Skeff Damer has done enough for honour—he now seeks to do something for happiness.' Back to office again I will not go. Five years and two months of unpaid services have I given to my country, and England is not ashamed to accept the unrewarded labours of her gifted sons! My very 'extraordinaries' have been cavilled at. I give you my word of honour, they have asked me for vouchers for the champagne and lobsters with which I have treated some of the most dangerous regicides of Europe—men whose language would make your hair stand on end, and whose sentiments actually curdled the blood as one listened to them.

"The elegant hospitalities which I dispensed, in the hope—vain hope!—of inducing them to believe that the social amenities of life had extended to our insular position—these the Office declares they have nothing to do with; and insolently asks me, 'Are there any other items of my pleasure whose cost I should wish to submit to Parliament?'

"Ask Talleyrand, ask Metternich, ask any of our own people—B., or S., or H.—since when have cookery and the ballet ceased to be the lawful weapons of diplomacy?

"The day of reckoning for all this, my dear Tony, is coming. At first I thought of making some of my friends in the House move for the correspondence between F. O. and myself—the Damer papers they would be called, in the language of the public journals — and thus bring on a smashing debate. Reconsideration, however, showed me that my memoirs, 'Five Years of a Diplomatist on Service,' would be the more fitting place; and in the pages of those volumes you will find revelations more astounding, official knaveries more nefarious, and political intrigues more Machiavellian, than the wildest imagination for wickedness has ever conceived. What would they not have given rather than see such an exposure? I almost think I will call my book, '"Extraordinaries" of a Diplomatist.' Sensational and taking both, that title! You mustn't be provoked if, in one of the lighter chapters—there must be light chapters—I stick in that little adventure of your own with my godfather."

"Confound the fellow!" muttered Tony, and with such a hearty indignation, that his mother heard him from the adjoining room, and hastened in to ask who or what had provoked him. Tony blundered out some sort of evasive reply, and then said, "Was it Dr. Stewart's voice I heard there a few minutes ago?"

"Yes, Tony; he called in as he was passing to Coleraine on important business. The poor man is much agitated by an offer that has just been made him to go far away over the seas, and finish his days, one may call it, at the end of the world. Some of this country folk, it seems, who settled in New Zealand, at a place they call Wellington Gap, had invited him to go out there and minister among them; and though he's not minded to make the change at his advanced time of life, nor disposed to lay his bones in a far-away land, yet for Dolly's sake—poor Dolly, who will be left friendless and homeless when he is taken away—he thinks, maybe, it's his duty to accept the offer; and so he's gone into the town to consult Dr. M'Candlish and the elder Mr. M'Elwain, and a few other sensible men."

"Why won't Dolly marry the man she ought to marry—a good true-hearted fellow, who will treat her well and be kind to her? Tell me that, mother."

"It mauna be—it mauna be," said the old lady, who, when much moved, frequently employed the Scotch dialect unconsciously.

"Is there a reason for her conduct?"

"There is a reason," said she, firmly.

"And do you know it? has she told you what it is?"

"I'm not at liberty to talk over this matter with you, Tony. Whatever I know, I know as a thing confided to me in honour."

"I only asked, Was the reason one that you yourself were satisfied with?"

"It was, and is," replied she, gravely.

"Do you think, from what you know, that Dolly would listen to any representations I might make her? for I know M'Gruder thoroughly, and can speak of him as a friend likes to speak."

"No, no, Tony—don't do it! don't do it!" cried she, with a degree of emotion that perfectly amazed him, for the tears swam in her eyes, and her lips trembled as she spoke. He stared fixedly at her, but she turned away her head, and for some minutes neither spoke.

"Come, mother," said Tony, at last, and in his kindliest voice, "you have a good head of your own,—think of some way to prevent the poor old Doctor from going off into exile."

"How could we help him that he would not object to?"

"What if you were to hit upon some plan of adopting Dolly? You have long loved her as if she were your own daughter, and she has returned your affections."

"That she has," muttered the old lady, as she wiped her eyes.

"What use is this new wealth of ours, if it benefit none but ourselves, mother? Just get the doctor to talk it all over with you, and say to him, 'Have no fears as to Dolly; she shall never be forced to marry against her inclinations—merely for support; her home shall be here with us, and she shall be no dependant neither.' I'll take care of that."

"How like your father you said these words, Tony!" cried she, looking at him with a gaze of love and pride together; "it was his very voice, too."

"I meant to have spoken to her on poor M'Gruder's behalf — I promised him I would; but if you tell me it is of no use——"

"I tell you more, Tony—I tell you it would be cruel; it would be worse than cruel," cried she, eagerly.

"Then I'll not do it, and I'll write to him to-day, and say so, though, Heaven knows, I'll be sorely puzzled to explain myself; but as he is a true man, he'll feel that I have done all for the best, and that if I have not served his cause it has not been for any lack of the will!"

"If you wish it, Tony, I could write to Mr. M'Gruder myself. A letter from an old body like me is sometimes a better means to break a misfortune than one from a younger hand. Age deals more naturally with sorrow, perhaps."

"You will be doing a kind thing, my dear mother," said he, as he drew her towards him, "and to a good fellow who deserves well of us."

"I want to thank him, besides, for his kindness and care of you, Tony; so just write his address for me there on that envelope, and I'll do it at once."

"I'm off for a ramble, mother, till dinner-time," said Tony, taking his hat."

"Are you going up to the Abbey, Toney?"

"No," said he, blushing slightly.

"Because, if you had, I'd have asked you to fetch me some fresh flowers. Dolly is coming to dine with us, and she is so fond of seeing flowers on the centre of the table."

"No; I have nothing to do at the Abbey. I'm off towards Portrush."

"Why not go over to the Burnside and fetch Dolly?" said she, carelessly.

"Perhaps I may—that is, if I should find myself in that quarter; but I'm first of all bent on a profound piece of thoughtfulness or a good smoke—pretty much the same thing with *me*, I believe. So good-bye for a while."

His mother looked after him with loving eyes till the tears dulled them; but there are tears which fall on the affections as the dew falls on flowers, and these were of that number.

"His own father—his own father!" muttered she, as she followed the stalwart figure till it was lost in the distance.

CHAPTER LXIII.

AT THE COTTAGE BESIDE THE CAUSEWAY.

I MUST use more discretion as to Mrs. Butler's correspondence than I have employed respecting Skeff Damer's. What she wrote on that morning is not to be recorded here. It will be enough if I say that her letter was not alone a kind one, but that it thoroughly convinced him who read it that her view was wise and true, and that it would be as useless as ungenerous to press Dolly further, or ask for that love which was not hers to give.

It was a rare event with her to have to write a letter. It was not, either, a very easy task; but if she had not the gift of facile expression, she had another still better for her purpose—an honest nature steadfastly determined to perform a duty. She knew her subject, too, and treated it with candour, while with delicacy.

While she wrote, Tony strolled along, puffing his cigar or relighting it, for it was always going out, and dreaming away in his own misty fashion over things past, present, and future, till really the actual and the ideal became so thoroughly commingled he could not well distinguish one from the other. He thought—he knew, indeed, he ought to be very happy. All his anxieties as to a career and a livelihood ended, he felt that a very enjoyable existence might lie before him, but somehow—he hoped he was not ungrateful—but somehow he was not so perfectly happy as he supposed his good fortune should have made him.

"Perhaps it will come later on; perhaps when I am active and employed; perhaps when I shall have learned to interest myself in the things money brings around a man; perhaps, too, when I can forget—ay, that was the lesson was hardest of all." All these passing thoughts, a good deal dashed through each other, scarcely contributing to enlighten his faculties; and he rambled on over rocks and yellow strand, up hillsides, and through fern-clad valleys, not in the least mindful of whither he was going.

At last he suddenly halted, and saw he was in the shrubberies of Lyle Abbey, his steps having out of old habit taken the one same path they had followed for many a year. The place was just as he had seen it last. Trees make no marvellous progress in the north of Ireland, and a longer absence than Tony's would leave them just as they were before. All was neat, orderly, and well kept; and the heaps of dried leaves and brushwood ready to be wheeled away, stood there as he saw them when he last walked that way with Alice. He was poor then, without a career, or almost a hope of one; and yet it was possible, could it be possible, that he was happier then than he now felt? Was it that love sufficed for all, and that the heart so filled had no room for other thoughts than those of her it worshipped? He certainly had loved her greatly. She—she alone made up that world in which he had lived. Her smile, her step, her laugh, her voice—ay, there they were, all before him. What a dream it was! Only a dream after all; for she never cared for him. She had led him on to love her, half in caprice, half in a sort of compassionate interest for a poor boy—boy she called him—to whom a passion for one above him was certain to elevate and exalt him in his own esteem. "Very kind, doubtless," muttered he, "but very cruel too. She might have remembered that this same dream was to have a very rough awaking. I had built nearly every hope upon one, and that one, she well knew, was never to be realized. It might not have been the most gracious way to do it, but I declare it would have been the most merciful, to have treated me as her mother did, who snubbed my pretensions at once. It was all right that I should recognize her superiority over me in a hundred ways; but perhaps she should not have kept it so continually in mind, as a sort of barrier against a warmer feeling for me. I suppose this is the fine-lady view of the matter. This is the theory that young fellows are to be civilized, as they call it, by a passion for a woman who is to amuse herself by their extravagancies, and then ask their gratitude for having deceived them.

"I'll be shot if I *am* grateful," said he, as he threw his cigar into the pond. "I'm astonished—amazed—now that it's all over" (here his voice shook a little), that my stupid vanity could ever have led me to think of her, or that I ever mistook that patronizing way she had towards me for more than good-nature. But, I take it, there are scores of fellows who have had the selfsame experiences. "Here's the seat I made for her," muttered he, as he came in front of a rustic bench. For a moment a savage thought crossed him that he would break it in pieces, and throw

the fragments into the lake—a sort of jealous anger lest some day or other she might sit there with "another;" but he restrained himself, and said, "Better not; better let her see that her civilizing process has done something, and that though I have lost my game I can bear my defeat becomingly."

He began to wish that she were there at that moment. Not that he might renew his vows of love, or repledge his affection; but to show her how calm and reasonable—ay, reasonable was her favourite word—he could be; how collectedly he could listen to her, and how composedly reply. He strolled up to the entrance door. It was open. The servants were busy in preparing for the arrival of their masters, who were expected within the week. All were delighted to see Master Tony again, and the words somehow rather grated on his ears. It was another reminder of that same "boyhood" he bore such a grudge against. "I am going to have a look out of the small drawing-room window, Mrs. Hayles," said he to the housekeeper, cutting short her congratulations, and hurrying upstairs.

It was true he went up for a view; but not of the coast-line to Fairhead, fine as it was. It was of a full-length portrait of Alice, life-size, by Grant. She was standing beside her horse—the Arab Tony trained for her. A braid of her hair had fallen, and she was in the act of arranging it, while one hand held up her drooping riding-dress. There was that in the air and attitude that bespoke a certain embarrassment with a sense of humorous enjoyment of the dilemma. A sketch from life, in fact, had given the idea of the picture, and the reality of the incident was unquestionable.

Tony blushed a deep crimson as he looked and muttered, "The very smile she had on when she said good-bye. I wonder I never knew her till now."

A favourite myrtle of hers stood in the window; he broke off a sprig of it, and placed it in his button-hole, and then slowly passed down the stairs and out into the lawn. With very sombre thoughts and slow steps he retraced his way to the cottage. He went over to himself much of his past life, and saw it, as very young men will often in such retrospects, far less favourably as regarded himself than it really was. He ought to have done—Heaven knows what. He ought to have been—scores of things which he never was, perhaps never could be. At all, events there was one thing he never should have imagined, that Alice Lyle—she was Alice Lyle always to him—in her treatment of him was ever more closely drawn towards him than the others of her family. "It was simply

the mingled kindness and caprice of her nature that made the difference; and if I hadn't been a vain fool I'd have seen it. I see it now, though; I can read it in the very smile she has in her picture. To be sure I have learned a good deal since I was here last; I have outgrown a good many illusions. I once imagined this dwarfed and stinted scrub to be a wood. I fancied the Abbey to be like a royal palace; and in Sicily a whole battalion of us have bivouacked in a hall that led to suites of rooms without number. If a mere glimpse of the world could reveal such astounding truths, what might not come of a more lengthened experience?"

"How tired and weary you look, Tony!" said his mother, as he threw himself into a chair; "have you overwalked yourself?"

"I suppose so," said he, with a half smile. "In my poorer days I thought nothing of going to the Abbey and back twice—I have done it even thrice—in one day; but perhaps this weight of gold I carry now is too heavy for me."

"I'd like to see you look more grateful for your good fortune, Tony," said she, gravely.

"I'm not ungrateful, mother; but up to this I have not thought much of the matter. I suspect, however, I was never designed for a life of ease and enjoyment. Do you remember what Dr. Stewart said one day, 'You may put a weed in a garden, and dig round it and water it, and it will only grow to be a big weed after all.'"

"I hope better from Tony—far better," said she, sharply. "Have you answered M'Carthy's letter? have you arranged where you are to meet the lawyers?"

"I have said in Dublin. They couldn't come here, mother; we have no room for them in this crib."

"You must not call it a 'crib' for all that. It sheltered your father once, and he carried a very high head, Tony."

"And for that very reason, dear mother, I'm going to make it our own home henceforth—without you'd rather go and live in that old manor-house on the Nore; they tell me it is beautiful."

"It was there your father was born, and I long to see it," said she, with emotion. "Who's that coming in at the gate, Tony?"

"It is Dolly," said he, rising, and going to the door to meet her.

"My dear Dolly," cried he, as he embraced her, and kissed her on either cheek; "this brings me back to old times at once."

If it was nothing else, the total change in Tony's appearance abashed her; the bronzed and bearded man, looking many years older than he was, seemed little like the Tony she had seen last; and so she half shrank back from his embrace, and, with a flushed cheek and almost constrained manner, muttered some words of recognition.

"How well you are looking," said he, staring at her, as she took off her bonnet, "and the nice glossy hair has all grown again, and I vow it is brighter and silkier than ever."

"What's all this flattery about bright een and silky locks I'm listening too?" said the old lady, coming out laughing into the hall.

"It's Master Tony displaying his foreign graces at my expense, ma'am," said Dolly, with a smile.

"Would you have known him again, Dolly? would you have thought that great hairy creature there was our Tony?"

"I think he is changed—a good deal changed," said Dolly, without looking at him.

"I didn't quite like it at first; but I'm partly getting used to it now; and though the Colonel never wore a beard on his upper lip, Tony's more like him now than ever." The old lady continued to ramble on about the points of resemblance between the father and son, and where certain traits of manner and voice were held in common; and though neither Tony nor Dolly gave much heed to her words, they were equally grateful to her for talking.

"And where's the doctor, Dolly? are we not to see him at dinner?"

"Not to-day, ma'am; he's gone over to M'Laidlaw's to make some arrangements about this scheme of ours—the banishment, he calls it."

"And is it possible, Dolly, that he can seriously contemplate such a step?" asked Tony, gravely.

"Yes; and very seriously too."

"And you, Dolly; what do you say to it?"

"I say to it what I have often said to a difficulty, what the old Scotch adage says of 'the stout heart to the stey brae.'"

"And you might have found more comforting words, lassie—how the winds can be tempered to the shorn lamb," said the old lady, almost rebukefully; and Dolly drooped her head in silence.

"I think it's a bad scheme," said Tony, boldly, and as though not hearing his mother's remark. "For a man at the doctor's age to go to the other end of the globe, to live in a new land,

and make new friendships at his time of life, is, I'm sure, a mistake."

"That supposes that we have a choice; but my father thinks we have no choice."

"I cannot see that. I cannot see that what a man has borne for five-and-thirty or forty years—he has been that long at the Burnside, I believe he can endure still longer. I must have a talk with him myself over it." And unconsciously—quite unconsciously—Tony uttered the last words with a high-sounding importance, so certain is it that in a man's worldly wealth there is a store of self-confidence that no mere qualities of head or heart can ever supply; and Dolly almost smiled at the assured tone and the confident manner of her former playfellow.

"My father will be glad to see you, Tony—he wants to hear all about your campaigns; he was trying two nights ago to follow you on the map, but it was such a bad one he had to give up the attempt."

"I'll give you mine," cried the old lady, "the map Tony brought over to myself. I'll no just give it, but I'll lend it to you; and there's a cross wherever there was a battle, and a red cross wherever Tony was wounded."

"Pooh, pooh, mother! don't worry Dolly about these things; she'd rather hear of pleasanter themes than battles and battle-fields. And here is one already—Jeanie says, 'dinner.'"

"Where did you find your sprig of myrtle at this time?" asked Dolly, as Tony led her in to dinner.

"I got it at the Abbey. I strolled up there to-day," said he, in a half-confusion. "Will you have it?"

"No," said she, curtly.

"Neither will I, then," cried he, tearing it out of his button-hole and throwing it away.

What a long journey in life can be taken in the few steps from the drawing-room to the dinner-table!

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE END.

As Dr. Stewart had many friends to consult and many visits to make—some of them, as he imagined, farewell ones—Dolly was persuaded, but not without difficulty, to take up her residence at the cottage till she should be able to return home. And a very pleasant week it was. To the old lady it was almost perfect happiness. She had her dear Tony back with her after all his dangers and escapes, safe and sound, and in such spirits as she had never seen him before. Not a cloud, not a shadow, now ever darkened his bright face; all was good-humour, and thoughtful kindness for herself and for Dolly.

And poor Dolly, too, with some anxious cares at her heart—a load that would have crushed many—bore up so well that she looked as cheery as the others, and entered into all the plans that Tony formed about his future house, and his gardens, and stables, as though many a hundred leagues of ocean were not soon to roll between her and the spots she traced so eagerly on the paper. One evening they sat even later than usual. Tony had induced Dolly, who was very clever with her pencil, to make him a sketch for a little ornamental cottage—one of those uninhabitable little homesteads, which are immensely suggestive of all the comforts they would utterly fail to realize; and he leaned over her as she drew, and his arm was on the back of her chair, and his face so close at times that it almost touched the braids of the silky hair beside him.

"You must make a porch there, Dolly; it would be so nice to sit there with that noble view down the glen at one's feet, and three distinct reaches of the Nore visible."

"Yes, I'll make a porch; I'll even make you yourself lounging in it. See, it shall be perfect bliss!"

"What does that mean?"

"That means smoke, sir; you are enjoying the heavenly luxury of tobacco, not the less intensely that it obscures the view."

"No, Dolly, I'll not have that. If you put me there don't have me smoking; make me sitting beside you as we are now—you drawing, and I looking over you."

"But I want to be a prophet as well as a painter, Tony. I desire to predict something that will be sure to happen, if you should ever build this cottage."

"I swear I will—I'm resolved on it."

"Well, then, so sure as you do, and so sure as you sit in that little honeysuckle-covered porch, you'll smoke."

"And why not do as I say? Why not make you sketching——"

"Because I shall not be sketching; because, by the time your cottage is finished, I shall probably be sketching a Maori chief, or a war-party bivouacking on the Raki-Raki."

Tony drew away his arm and leaned back in his chair, a sense almost of faintish sickness creeping over him.

"Here are the dogs, too," continued she. "Here is Lance with his great majestic face, and here Gertrude with her fine pointed nose and piercing eyes, and here's little Spicer as saucy and pert as I can make him without colour; for one ought to have a little carmine for the corner of his eye, and a slight tinge to accent the tip of his nose. Shall I add all your 'emblems,' as they call them, and put in the fishing-rods against the wall, and the landing-net, and the guns and pouches?

She went on sketching with inconceivable rapidity, the drawing keeping pace almost with her words.

But Tony no longer took the interest he had done before in the picture, but seemed lost in some deep and difficult reflection.

"Shall we have a bridge—a mere plank will do—over the river here, Tony? and then this zigzag pathway will be a short way up to the cottage."

He never heard her words, but arose and left the room. He passed out into the little garden in front of the house, and leaning on the gate, looked out into the dark still night. Poor Tony! impenetrable as that darkness was, it was not more difficult to peer through than the thick mist that gathered around his thoughts.

"Is that Tony?" cried his mother from the doorway.

"Yes," said he, moodily, for he wanted to be left to his own thoughts.

"Come here, Tony, and see what a fine manly letter your friend Mr. M'Gruder writes in answer to mine."

Tony was at her side in an instant, and almost tore the letter in his eagerness to read it. It was very brief, but well deserved all she had said of it. With a delicacy which perhaps might scarcely have been looked for in a man so educated and brought up, he seemed to appreciate the existence of a secret he had no right to question; and bitterly as the resolve cost him, he declared that he had no longer a claim on Dolly's affection.

"I scarcely understand him mother; do you?" asked Tony.

"It's not very hard to understand, Tony," said she, gravely. "Mr. M'Gruder sees that Dolly Stewart could not have given him her love and affection as a man's wife ought to give, and he would be ashamed to take her without it."

"But why couldn't she? Sam seems to have a sort of suspicion as to the reason, and I cannot guess it."

"If he does suspect, he has the nice feeling of a man of honour, and sees that it is not for one placed as he is to question it."

"If any man were to say to me, 'Read that letter, and tell me what does it infer,' I'd say the writer thought that the girl he wanted to marry liked some one else."

"Well, there's one point placed beyond an inference, Tony; the engagement is ended, and she is free."

"I suppose she is very happy at it."

"Poor Dolly has little heart for happiness just now. It was a little before dinner a note came from the doctor to say that all the friends he had consulted advised him to go out, and were ready and willing to assist him in every way to make the journey. As January is the stormy month in these seas, they all recommended his sailing as soon as he possibly could; and the poor man says very feelingly, 'To-morrow, mayhap, will be my farewell sermon to those who have sat under me eight-and-forty years.'"

"Why did you not make some proposal like what I spoke of, mother?" asked he, almost peevishly.

"I tried to do it, Tony, but he wouldn't hear of it. He has a pride of his own that is very dangerous to wound, and he stopped me at once, saying, 'I hope I mistake your meaning; but lest I should not, say no more of this for the sake of our old friendship.'"

"I call such pride downright want of feeling. It is neither more nor less than consummate selfishness."

"Don't tell him so, Tony, or maybe you'd fare worse in the argument. He has a wise, deep head, the doctor."

"I wish he had a little heart with it," said Tony, sulkily, and turned again into the garden.

Twice did Jeanie summon him to tea, but he paid no attention to the call; so engrossed, indeed, was he by his thoughts, that he even forgot to smoke, and not impossibly the want of his accustomed weed added to his other embarrassments.

"Miss Dolly's for ganging hame, Master Tony," said the maid at last, "and the mistress wants you to go wi' her."

As Tony entered the hall, Dolly was preparing for the road. Coquetry was certainly the least of her accomplishments, and yet there was something that almost verged on it in the hood she wore, instead of a bonnet, lined with some plushy material of a rich cherry colour, and forming a frame around her face that set off all her features to the greatest advantage. Never did her eyes look bluer or deeper—never did the gentle beauty of her face light up with more of brilliancy. Tony never knew with what rapture he was gazing on her till he saw that she was blushing under his fixed stare.

The leave-taking between Mrs. Butler and Dolly was more than usually affectionate; and even after they had separated, the old lady called her back and kissed her again.

"I don't know how mother will bear up after you leave her," muttered Tony, as he walked along at Dolly's side; "she is fonder of you than ever."

Dolly murmured something, but inaudibly.

"For my own part," continued Tony, "I can't believe this step necessary at all. It would be an ineffable disgrace to the whole neighbourhood to let one we love and revere as we do him, go away in his old age, one may say, to seek his fortune. He belongs to us, and we to him. We have been linked together for years, and I can't bear the thought of our separating."

This was a very long speech for Tony, and he felt almost fatigued when it was finished; but Dolly was silent, and there was no means by which he could guess the effect it had produced upon her.

"As to my mother," continued he, "she'd not care to live here any longer—I know it. I don't speak of myself, because it's the habit to think I don't care for any one or anything—

that's the estimate people form of *me*, and I must bear it as I can."

"It's less than just, Tony," said Dolly, gravely.

"Oh, if I am to ask for justice, Dolly, I shall get the worst of it," said he, laughing, but not merrily.

For a while they walked on without a word on either side.

"What a calm night!" said Dolly, "and how large the stars look! They tell me that in southern latitudes they seem immense."

"You are not sorry to leave this, Dolly?" murmured he, gloomily; "are you?"

A very faint sigh was all her answer.

"I'm sure no one could blame you," he continued. "There is not much to attach any one to the place, except, perhaps, a half-savage like myself, who finds its ruggedness congenial."

"But you will scarcely remain here, now, Tony; you'll be more likely to settle at Butler Hall, won't you?"

"Wherever I settle it shan't be here, after you have left it," said he, with energy.

"Sir Arthur Lyle and his family are all coming back in a few days, I hear."

"So they may; it matters little to me, Dolly. Shall I tell you a secret? Take my arm, Dolly—the path is rough here—you may as well lean on me. We are not likely to have many more walks together. Oh dear! if you were as sorry as I am, what a sad stroll this would be!"

"What's your secret, Tony?" asked she in a faint voice.

"Ah! my secret, my secret," said he, ponderingly: "I don't know why I called it a secret—but here is what I meant. You remember, Dolly, how I used to live up there at the Abbey formerly. It was just like my home. I ordered all the people about just as if they had been my own servants—and, indeed, they minded my orders more than their master's. The habit grew so strong upon me, of being obeyed and followed, that I suppose I must have forgot my own real condition. I take it I must have lost sight of who and what I actually was, till one of the sons—a young fellow in the service in India—came back and contrived to let me make the discovery, that, though I never knew it, I was really living the life of a dependant. I'll not tell you how this stung me, but it did sting me—all the more

that I believed, I fancied, myself—don't laugh at me—but I really imagined I was in love with one of the girls—Alice. She was Alice Trafford then."

"I had heard of that," said Dolly, in a faint voice.

"Well, she too undeceived me—not exactly as unfeelingly nor as offensively as her brother, but just as explicitly—you know what I mean?"

"No; tell me more clearly," said she, eagerly.

"I don't know how to tell you. It's a long story—that is to say, I was a long while under a delusion, and she was a long while indulging it. Fine ladies, I'm told, do this sort of thing when they take a caprice into their heads to civilize young barbarians of my stamp."

"That's not the generous way to look at it, Tony."

"I don't want to be generous—the adage says one ought to begin by being just. Skeffy—you know whom I mean, Skeff Damer—saw it clearly enough—he warned me about it. And what a clever fellow he is! would you believe it, Dolly? he actually knew all the time that I was not really in love when I thought I was. He knew that it was a something made up of romance and ambition and boyish vanity, and that my heart, my real heart, was never in it."

Dolly shook her head, but whether in dissent or in sorrow it was not easy to say.

"Shall I tell you more?" cried Tony, as he drew her arm closer to him, and took her hand in his; "shall I tell you more, Dolly? Skeff read me as I could not read myself. He said to me, 'Tony, this is no case of love, it is the flattered vanity of a very young fellow to be distinguished not alone by the prettiest, but the most petted woman of society. *You*,' said he, 'are receiving all the homage paid to her at second-hand.' But more than all this, Dolly; he not merely saw that I was not in love with Alice Trafford, but he saw with whom my heart was bound up, for many and many a year."

"Her sister, her sister Bella," whispered Dolly.

"No, but with yourself, my own own Dolly," cried he, and turning, and before she could prevent it, he clasped her in his arms, and kissed her passionately.

"Oh, Tony!" said she, sobbing, "you that I trusted, you that I confided in, to treat me thus."

"It is that my heart is bursting, Dolly, with this long pent-up love, for I now know I have loved you all my life long. Don't be angry with me, my darling Dolly; I'd rather die at your feet

than hear an angry word from you. Tell me if you can care for me; oh, tell me, if I strive to be all you could like and love, that you will not refuse to be my own."

She tried to disengage herself from his arm; she trembled, heaved a deep sigh, and fell with her head on his shoulder.

"And you are my own," said he, again kissing her; "and now the wide world has not so happy a heart as mine."

Of those characters of my story who met happiness, it is as well to say no more. A more cunning craftsman than myself has told us, that the less we track human life, the more cheerily we shall speak of it. Let us presume, and it is no unfair presumption, that, as Tony's life was surrounded with a liberal share of those gifts which make existence pleasurable, he was neither ungrateful nor unmindful of them. Of Dolly I hope there need be no doubt. "The guid dochter is the best warrant for the guid wife:" so said her father, and he said truly.

In the diary of a Spanish guerilla chief, there is mention of a "nobile Inglese," who met him at Malta, to confer over the possibility of a landing in Calabria, and the chances of a successful rising there. The Spaniard speaks of this man as a person of rank, education, and talents, high in the confidence of the Court, and evidently warmly interested in the cause. He was taken prisoner by the Piedmontese troops on the third day after they landed, and, though repeatedly offered life under conditions it would have been no dishonour to accept, was tried by court-martial, and shot.

There is reason to believe that the "nobile Inglese" was Maitland.

From the window where I write, I can see the promenade on the Pincian Hill, and if my eyes do not deceive me, I can perceive that at times the groups are broken, and the loungers fall back, to permit some one to pass. I have called the waiter to explain the curious circumstance, and asked if it be royalty that is so deferentially acknowledged. He smiles, and says—"No. It is the major domo of the palace exacts the respect you see. He can do what he likes at Rome. Antonelli himself is not greater than the Count M'Caskey."

As some unlettered guide leads the traveller to the verge of a cliff, from which the glorious landscape beneath is visible, and winding river and embowered homestead, and swelling plain and far-off mountain, are all spread out beneath for the eye to revel

over, so do I place you, my valued reader, on that spot from which the future can be seen, and modestly retire that you may gaze in peace, weaving your own fancies at will, and investing the scene before you with such images and such interests as best befit it.

My part is done: if I have suggested something for *yours*, it will not be all in vain that I have written "Tony Butler."

THE END.

Woodfall & Kinder, Printers, Milford Lane, Strand, London, W.C.

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